After John Paul—The Editors, John Jay Hughes

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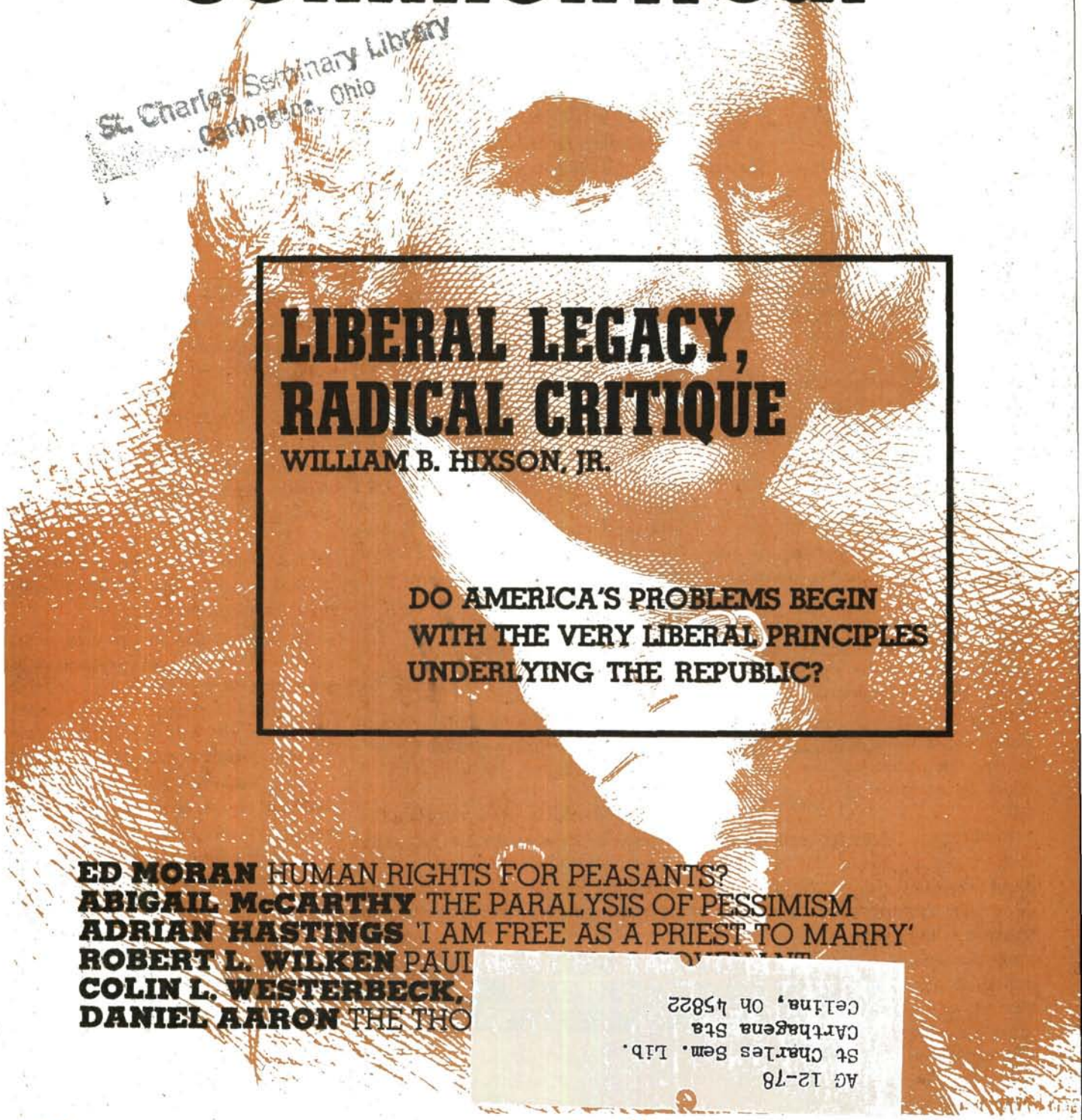

LIBERAL LEGACY, RADICAL CRITIQUE

WILLIAM B. HIXSON, JR.

DO AMERICA'S PROBLEMS BEGIN WITH THE VERY LIBERAL PRINCIPLES UNDERLYING THE REPUBLIC?

ED MORAN HUMAN RIGHTS FOR PEASANTS?
ABIGAIL McCARTHY THE PARALYSIS OF PESSIMISM
ADRIAN HASTINGS 'I AM FREE AS A PRIEST TO MARRY'
ROBERT L. WILKEN PAUL
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CORRESPONDENCE

McCarthyism and the '60s

Nashville, Tenn.

To the Editors: Donald Crosby's recent article on McCarthyism and Catholicism [July 21] was quite informative, shedding light on a generally unexplored aspect of McCarthyism. Yet the article is, in more than a few ways, needlessly defensive and, at times, even misleading, albeit unintentionally.

I have also recently researched the same topic as Fr. Crosby, and since I did not have access to his yet-unpublished book, I had to wade through many of the same books, articles and magazines as Fr. Crosby (including an indispensable article by Crosby himself). He is quite right in refuting the Walsh story, as well as the spurious analyses of various results of McCarthy-influenced elections. Nevertheless, by arguing so persuasively against the strength of the McCarthy-church link, Fr. Crosby very nearly denies the link's existence.

That McCarthy was thought by many to be a spokesman for his church is unfortunate but undeniable. Yet no less a force than Cardinal Spellman, at the peak of his influence, was a strong supporter of McCarthy and his "ism." When the head of the New York archdiocese gives his blessing to a political issue, few non-Catholics, or even Catholics, can be faulted for believing the cardinal's views to be those of the church itself.

Furthermore, Joe McCarthy realized, much as Nixon did with the Silent Majority, the voting power of a largely ignored group—the less-educated, lower-class Catholics—and made the most of his discovery by appealing to their hopes and values. Joe was one of their own who had made it; he was unquestionably patriotic, to a group whose own patriotism was always suspect. Through McCarthy, these Catholics became the political insiders, the offense for a change. They could finally become part of the American mainstream which had always eluded them. Now *they* could impugn the loyalty of others, as well as engage in xenophobia; they were no longer the recipients of the hatred, but now the establishment figures using it. This type of Catholic understood Communism as a threat to his religion but did not necessarily comprehend the refinements involved. Thus, church direction was not "muted and ambiguous," but rather like so many church issues, far too complicated to be digested readily.

The tantalizing question Fr. Crosby raises at the end of the article may well focus on the most interesting aspect of McCarthy's impact. As John Cogley has so aptly noted, McCarthyism took the American Catholic out of the sheltered Catholic ghetto existence and thrust him into the forefront of immediate political issues, especially those of civil liberties. The separation of church and state which American Catholics had so diligently observed faded; the need for a civil conscience based on a religious morality became clear to many Catholics who had opposed McCarthy. Hence, just a few years after McCarthy's death, nuns and priests marched with Martin Luther King in Selma, Alabama. This sort of participation grew as the decade progressed, finally embracing the morality of the Vietnam war. Some even faced jail and death in their efforts. The church in America had moved from a stagnant monolith to a vigorous, forceful faith in action.

The distance is great between the terrors of McCarthyism and the commitment of the Catholic activism of the sixties. Yet the link exists between the two, one being the outgrowth of reaction to the other. With a newly-raised conscience, Catholics had been drawn out of isolation by McCarthyism and brought into the reality of the American experience, both political and social. If indeed there is any merit in McCarthyism, it lies in the spiritual activism of both word and deed that formed in reaction to Joe's vicious campaign. *That* is something of which Catholics can truly be proud.

JOHN GALLAGHER

Proposition 13

Claremont, Calif.

To the Editors: Your editorial "The Message from California" [Aug. 4] is by far the best commentary on our state's shameful voting that has yet appeared. You are correct that there was valid complaint—primarily against the failure of the Legislature to enact a decent law providing relief from property taxes and compensating revenue from other sources. Such a bill failed of passage in the State Senate by the narrowest of margins and with the support it should have had from the administration.

But you are correct, I am afraid, in your interpretation of the vote as one of resentment—against all government, against the poor, the elderly and the disabled. The most cruel blow that has been struck in the aftermath of Proposition 13 is the denial of any cost of living increase to the mothers and children dependent on Aid-to-Dependent-Children funds. They will just have to be more hungry—so, as you put it "the attention of America is focused on the swimming pool in some middle-class California backyard."

The saddest part of the story is the way most of the nation's politicians are falling all over themselves to make some kind of demi-god out of Howard Jarvis, and to begin to dismantle government programs and forbid growth.

They may be misinterpreting the real will of the American people. No one likes to pay taxes. But most Americans have done so with reasonably good spirit for the very reason you give in your editorial—"to help fulfill the promises of the American dream."

Our problem may be more one of timid politicians than of a people's revolt.

And in this connection it is interesting to note that despite all the ballyhoo about the "overwhelming"

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vote for Proposition 13, the fact is that only 27 percent of eligible voters in California voted for Proposition 13. Only 42 percent of the 15.5 million eligible California voters took the trouble to vote at all. That is, 6.5 million voters cast their ballots on Proposition 13. Of these, 2.3 million voted against it. And 4.2 million voted for it.

A good many of them are sorry they did.

For we are only beginning to feel the effects on our schools, our child care, our health care for the elderly, and in many other ways that will soon become apparent. JERRY VOORHIS

East Meets West

Jackson Hgts., N.Y.

To the Editors: My wife and I were amused to read James Baker's reply [Aug. 4] to John Moffitt on the subject of certain disputed facts in the unfortunate death of Thomas Merton, in which Moffitt was described as having a "western" mind. If true, Moffitt so far has been doing a good job of disguising his condition. To begin with, he was a member of a Hindu monastic order for 25 years. But it is in his writings that he should best be revealed: perhaps in the mystical thread that weaves through and connects four volumes of poetry, two written while a Hindu, and two since becoming a Catholic; there was also his seminal book on Eastern spirituality, *Journey to Gorakhpur: An Encounter with Christ Beyond Christianity*. Readers of these books, I am sure, would have no trouble in agreeing that, if not exactly "eastern," there is something assuredly "non-western" at work here. By the standards of the age, Moffitt must be painfully quiet, if I may judge from the fact that he never seems to want to call any attention to himself; as a result the general public may not have heard enough of what must be one of the most authentic spiritual quests in our midst.

In reading Moffitt, I am always made aware of the western egotistical

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MOURNING FOR AN UNKNOWN POPE

It is easier to mourn the death of Pope John Paul I than to assess his brief reign. Those who know the Vatican well are saying that, with a few symbolic gestures, he may have left a mark on the papacy that is nearly indelible. For most of us, however, Albino Luciani was an unknown pope. We followed, first with eagerness and then with a growing sense of the ridiculous, the strenuous attempts to discover who he was. He smiled, his father was a socialist, he rejected the tiara for a simple stole, he spoke informally at his audience; as Patriarch of Venice, he had urged parishes to dispose of their jewels, he liked to walk and bicycle and even, *Time* gravely reported, "carrying a cake in a pink box . . . once walked 25 minutes . . . to the meeting of an ecumenical commission."

In all this sifting of portents, there was something both embarrassing and misleading. Embarrassing because it reflected a church still not candid about the conflicts of viewpoint and the complexity of deliberation that lie behind its official postures. What with the secrecy of the conclave and the official reticence to admit openly the plurality of opinion in the church, observers were reduced to poring over the new pope's words and gestures in a manner more typical of the coverage of regimes in Moscow and Peking. And this exercise was misleading besides, first because it so often assumed the premise that a good and holy man would necessarily be a good pope, a premise that history has belied, as recently as the reign of Saint Pius X; and second because the reading of portents was almost always colored by the desperate longing of everyone that the new pope fit their own particular model of the leader that would best serve the church and world.

Is it then as a man, and not as a pope—as the holy pastor he so clearly was and not the pastor he might yet have been—that we mourn Albino Luciani? No doubt the simple fact of human identification with this humble individual has played a great part in the world's grief. "If a clod be washed

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away by the sea, Europe is the less, as well as if a promontory were . . .; any man's death diminishes me, because I am involved in mankind." But that is not the full answer. In the days before John Paul's sudden death, tens of thousands of Iranians were destroyed by an earthquake, hundreds of their fellow citizens were killed by their own leader's troops. In India floods washed away thousands; in Nicaragua a dictator methodically massacred his way back to power. All these deaths diminish us. Do we turn our attention to one death only because, in that case, we knew the man's name and his character and, in the other cases, the individuals are lost in obscurity?

No. There is a connection between John Paul's death and those many others. It is a fact that in our time the papacy, once the very symbol of reaction among the enlightened, has become a symbol of universal hope. It stands before the world as a reminder of that impossible claim that the lives and sufferings of all, Iranians, Indians, Nicaraguans, the obscure and the powerful, the victims of earthquakes, of floods, of dictators—even the dictators themselves—can be transformed, in this world and beyond it, by self-giving love. That is why the world looks so intently, despite all its differences of belief, at Rome. That is why it grieves on this occasion and why it is so sorely disappointed on other occasions. That is why we mourn not only a man but a Pope, however known. And that is what the cardinals should keep in mind when they assemble, as the church and humanity always do, to begin again.

MEMPHIS BLUES

One of the unfulfilled promises of Jimmy Carter's presidential campaign was the pledge to mobilize a broad-based, active Democratic party and bring it to bear on the maneuverings of Washington "insiders." The pledge was not made so much in words as in the memorable sight of Carter sharing the Convention podium with representatives of party factions that had, since 1965, been bitterly at war with one another. The hope of a revived party has since faded, and though the Democrats are now almost a permanent majority in Congress they are as subject as Republicans to pessimistic pronouncements about the decline of political parties, and the corresponding fragmentation of the citizenry into special interests and single-issue lobbies.

Many causes have been adduced for this decline, but no small part of the blame should rest on the political parties themselves. Consider the opportunity the Democrats seem determined to lose at their mid-term convention, scheduled for Memphis this December.

The first Democratic mid-term convention was held in 1974, the idea being that without the pressure of choosing and running a candidate, the party could debate issues candidly and take stock on its own policies. Had such a convention been the practice earlier—so the argument went—the Johnson administration might have avoided the blood-letting of 1968.

Though the '74 convention was an aid to Carter's nomination—it demonstrated that the "old guard" had not reappropriated party leadership in the wake of McGovern's defeat—today the administration is apparently set on reducing the 1978 mid-term meeting to a useless formality. The number of elected delegates has bnee reduced by a third from 1974, decreasing the strength of dissident viewpoints; the process of introducing resolutions has been made unnecessarily difficult; and there will be no voting on resolutions until the last session of an extended weekend agenda. Since resolutions can only be passed by a majority of delegates elected rather than a majority still present, this last arrangement neatly rules out any actions at odds with administration policy. As for the scheduled workshops, the Democratic National Committee has shown no tendency toward giving anyone but administration loyalists a role on the presiding panels. The chairman of the program and agenda committee has been heard to insist that there must be "no embarrassment" to the President. It's obvious what he means, but from a different perspective, perhaps one more democratic as well as Democratic, the meeting is already an embarrassment to the President.

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FOR THE NEXT ELECTION

LESSONS AFTER JOHN PAUL I

"In the midst of life we are in death." Seldom has the truth of this antiphon from the old breviary Office of the Dead been more vividly illustrated than in the death of Albino Luciani, only 34 days after his election as Pope John Paul. As Catholics the world over rose to celebrate the Mass of the Archangels, they learned that their chief pastor had been called home by the angel of death, to celebrate the feast where Mass and sacraments are neither possible, nor necessary.

What had he accomplished in the shortest pontificate for more than three and a half centuries? Little indeed, the secular media informed us. He had not pronounced, we read, upon "the great questions which divide the Catholic Church," amongst which were listed, with characteristic incomprehension, "abortion." But then we remembered: upon his election five weeks previously the

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same organs of public opinion had solemnly informed us that the new pope was "against abortion"—blissfully unaware that this was roughly equivalent to saying that an American president was "against Communism."

Pope John Paul's most important dogmatic pronouncement was identical with that made by every Catholic, including children (whose sparkling catechist this Papa Luciani delighted to be): the creeds of the church's liturgy. His most important moral pronouncement was the statement of his own life. If that record seems modest, it was at least equal to that compiled by the first pope. Peter's creed consisted of little but the lapidary confession, "Jesus is Lord," added to the ancient statements of Jewish monotheism. Peter's moral record included open cowardice: before the Lord's crucifixion, and later over the admission of gentile converts to church fellowship, a matter on which Paul "opposed Peter to his face, for he was clearly in the wrong."

Brief though his pontificate was, John Paul established a number of significant precedents which we can recognize, even now, as irreversible. The thousand-year-old ceremony of papal coronation, and with it the triple crown with all its triumphalistic associations, has finally been consigned to the museum of history. While the same is not quite true of the *sedia gestatoria*, it will be clear henceforth to all but the most bigoted anti-Catholic that when a pope permits himself to be carried about in a ceremonial chair (in which all three popes since Pius XII have felt uncomfortable), it is so that people may see him, and not because he is above the rest of humankind. John Paul's successor will find it increasingly difficult to use the ancient papal "we," save where the solemnity of the occasion demands it. The instant popularity of the late Pope's straightforward and down-to-earth diction will render recourse to the convolutions of the soporific curial style increasingly problematical. By beginning his reign with a simple Mass "to inaugurate the ministry of the church's Supreme Pastor," John Paul gave this title a prominence which his successor will be unable to ignore. And his clearly-expressed intention to take seriously the episcopal collegiality mandated by Vatican II both sets the course for his successor and calls into question the pessimistic assessment of a brilliant and celebrated clerical journalist in August: that the conclave to elect Paul VI's successor would be a contest between the victors and the vanquished of Vatican II; and that the most the victors could hope for was a standoff.

A matter to which the late Pope would doubtless have turned in time, since it received the close attention of his three predecessors, was improving the rules for the choice of his successor. The cardinals who will soon gather to choose a new pope will be in a somber mood, conscious that the man who remarked, immediately after they elected him, "May God forgive you for what you have done to me," might well be alive today had they permitted him to return to Venice after the conclave. Inevitably the health of prospective candidates will be closely scrutinized by his electors.

Indirectly, but with equal inevitability, this raises another question: whether the church is well served by a system which excludes from serious consideration for its highest office candidates below their early sixties. Where but in the Catholic Church would men in their late fifties be considered "too young" for election to one of the world's most onerous positions? Hitherto discussion of this matter seems to have been limited to speculation about extension of the present episcopal age limit of 75 to the Bishop of Rome. We shall never know whether Pope John Paul would have created another precedent by resigning upon reaching that age.

His successor may wish to consider another solution: election of a pope for a fixed term. This is already the rule for the superiors of most religious orders. What about ten years? This would be quite long enough to permit a pope to set his stamp upon the church, without killing him in the process. It would open the church's highest office to men in their prime not only at their election, but with the additional promise of continued vigor at the conclusion of their term. This would go far to eliminate the stagnation and drift that have so often characterized the closing years of a pontificate.

Since only a pope can change the rules in such a matter, discussion of this question might seem an exercise in futility. If there is any merit, however, to the argument, advanced above, that John Paul's clear commitment to power-sharing in the church constitutes a mandate for his successor, then the next pope is unlikely to consider that all wisdom resides in Rome, or even in the hierarchy. There seems every reason to expect that he will be open to the views of members of his flock, however humble.

Meanwhile, the cardinals are in a bind. Only a pope can alter the conditions under which a pope is elected and candidates are limited to non-binding expressions of personal opinion about possible future changes. Anything like a commitment would nullify the election through the canonical crime of simony: obtaining church office for a consideration.

As we await, once again, the senior Cardinal Deacon's announcement of "great joy," we would do well to treat journalistic speculation about the outcome with the skepticism it deserves, and prepare for the unexpected. This is indicated not only by the astonishing events of the last five weeks, but by a factor of unparalleled significance: the renewed outpouring of prayer all over the world to the Spirit of Him whose thoughts are not our thoughts, whose ways are not our ways, and for whom all things are possible. JOHN JAY HUGHES

(*A widely published church historian, Father John Jay Hughes is adjunct professor of history at St. Louis University.*)

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THE PARALYSIS OF PESSIMISM

ABIGAIL McCARTHY

It is late September as I write, and one of the many primary days in an off-election year. On this elbow of Cape Cod—literally thirty miles out to sea—September days are beautiful, but very short. The dark has begun to close in early, reminding us late stayers that we draw on to the end of the year, to November and December when there are really no late afternoons, only early evenings.

Those long, long evenings will go on and on through January and February and early March. Their effect is strange, Cape social workers say. Some people contentedly sew, carve, tinker, watch television or take up amateur theater, but others are made desperate and depressed. A letter writer to this morning's *Boston Globe* recommends a concoction of hard cider and rum which, if mulled, he suggests, "makes New England winter evenings more bearable."

I am not sure of his remedy but I know that one of my own was surely not the answer. When I came here to write one February I took to filling up the evenings by reading what my children had left around the house, books like the works of Ray Bradbury, Robert Heinlein and Kurt Vonnegut. I became as acutely depressed as I have ever been in my lifetime. I thought then that it was the concentrated effect of that kind of reading. Perhaps it was the combination of the reading and the dark.

I suppose it is the coincidence of that memory with election day which makes me think that I have stumbled on one of the many undiscovered causes of a current political phenomenon. For, as sure as the election takes place, the analysts will be commenting within the week on the fact that so few people in the 34-and-under age group bothered to vote. Why the young fail to enter the political process is of great concern to political scientists and practical politicians. An easy answer is that they have been alienated by Vietnam, Watergate, the exposure of bribery in high places and of the corruption of institutions like the FBI and the CIA. Perhaps. But there are other partial answers. And today, recalling my winter experience here, I wonder whether one might be that a generation bred on science fiction—or speculative fiction as the newer writers prefer to call it—cannot escape an affliction of the spirit which makes it extremely difficult to believe in the slogging, persevering, step-by-step effort by which change is brought about in a democracy.

The privileged among the young have fed on science fiction since childhood; it has been part of the college sub-culture for thirty years or more. Once the cult of the few, it has become the cult of the many: witness the enthusiasm for movies like *Star Wars* and *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*, the revival of *Star Trek*. Again it is the conventional wisdom to say that this trend is evidence of a thirst for mystery and transcendence in a culture in which so many do not believe. I would say, rather, that, in its correspondence to the literary genre from which it sprang, it betrays a growing lack of faith in man and his possibilities—even a collective self-hatred.

While uncompromising realism and introverted psychology dominated the mainstream of literature, the imaginative took refuge in subgroups meant to entertain—westerns, gothics, detective and science fiction. The growing importance of science fiction in its influence on thought, or, better, on attitude toward life, was not apparent until it re-entered the mainstream with books like George Orwell's *1984* and Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*. Think how many editorials and articles lamenting creeping bureaucratic control have taken off with reference to *1984*! It is some measure of the effect of the whole genre on the consciousness of the generation on whom the future depends. And the "negative Utopias" of Orwell and Huxley have given way, in the meantime, to savage satire and black comedy of which Anthony Burgess's *Clockwork Orange* and Kurt Vonnegut's whole *oeuvre* are only the best known.

Orwell, his editors tell us, was convinced that modern man was inadequate to cope with the demands of his history. Ray Bradbury's classic, *The Martian Chronicles*, not well known to the average reader but treasured by the *aficionados*, was telling us, according to critic Clifton Fadiman at the time it was written, that "human beings are still mental and moral children who cannot be trusted with the terrifying toys they have by some tragic accident invented." Huxley, commenting on *Brave New World*, said that it was written with the idea "that human beings are given free will in order to choose between insanity on the one hand and lunacy on the other." The way in which later writers like Vonnegut play on these themes is illustrated by *The Sirens of Titan*. In this cruel and clever little parable a wandering robot tries for centuries to find his way home to a far-off world. His creators and masters cause the building of the pyramids and the Great Wall of China as signals and signposts for him. In other words, man is irrelevant to his history; his undertakings have no rational purpose. Vonnegut's style makes the absurd effective.

The most important writers of science fiction thirty years ago were

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LIBERAL LEGACY, RADICAL CRITIQUE

WILLIAM B. HIXSON, JR.

Are liberal principles at the root of America's current difficulties? What are the alternatives?

At noon on August 9, 1974, a new President of the United States was sworn in, his predecessor having resigned under threat of imminent removal from office because of his violation of the Constitution. Later that day, the Minority Leader of the United States wrote the following note, by hand, as befit the dignity and antiquity of the proposed recipient:

> August 9, 1974
> The Honorable James Madison
> Sir:
> It worked.
> Sincerely,
> Hugh Scott
> United States Senator

No one watching the crisis of the Nixon Presidency in 1973-74 could miss this constant invocation of the framers of the Constitution; it was then, and not in the over-publicized Bicentennial celebration of two years later, that Americans rediscovered their eighteenth-century origins. A *New Yorker* editorialist, for example, commented at the outset of the crisis that the republic was being saved from Presidential tyranny not by any action on the part of the American people but "by the long arm of the Founding Fathers reaching down across two centuries . . . we didn't save the system; the system saved us." And looking back on the crisis in the very last days of the Nixon Presidency, the journalist Elizabeth Drew was reminded of James Madison's observation (in the fifty-first of the *Federalist* essays) that only by creating a constitutional system in which "ambition must be made to counteract ambition" and "the interest of the man . . . connected to the constitutional rights of the place"—could the government be required to control itself. Ultimately, she concluded, it was the self-interest of congressmen and federal judges in preserving the rights of their branches of government that brought Nixon down, and, she added, that was "how the framers of the Constitution understood . . . it would work." For thoughtful journalists and politicians close to the centers of power, then—and probably for most Americans—"the system" worked in 1973-74. And that "system" was at bottom a constitutional order associated primarily with Madison, an order classically liberal in its fear of power, in its concern with balancing power, and in its reliance upon individual self-interest to achieve that goal.

If some see the liberal constitutional order as America's salvation, however, others—often younger, usually centered in the academy, admittedly more "radical"—see it as part of America's continuing nightmare. There has been for some time a growing suspicion on the part of these academic critics that our constitutional order, premised as it is on self-interest, tends in practice to benefit the organized self-interest in the powerful at the expense of the disorganized powerless. The Madisonian system cannot, in other words, achieve even an approximation of distributive justice. And the experience of the recent past has even raised questions about what was supposed to be the constitutional order's greatest strength, its protection of diversity. Instead, some would now argue, in eras of widespread dissidence the system's pretense of tolerance is dropped and (in Philip

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Green's vivid metaphor) we begin to see "Hobbes' ferocious eyes peering out behind tolerant Madison's skull." Others among these critics would maintain that a constitutional order premised on egoistic individualism eventually produces a society of egoistic individualists, self-made monsters (to use Garry Wills's image) whose major product is themselves. And such individuals will not tolerate any group which challenges their self-concept, whether racially or culturally defined. Michael Rogin puts it this way: "groups so different . . . had to be incorporated or mastered, cured or imprisoned, made safe or destroyed" but "they could not be permitted to enjoy a secure and separate existence." This, then, begins the contemporary radical indictment of a liberal America: a government which cannot provide justice but can only repress the victims of injustice; a society of fabricated individuals deeply intolerant of alternative cultures; and Nixon himself the authentic embodiment of liberalism in crisis.

It should be clear that this radical critique of liberalism represents far more than a specific attack on that segment of the Democratic party which, from the era of Franklin D. Roosevelt to that of Edward M. Kennedy, has been labeled "liberal." Rather, this critique is nothing less than an indictment of the main tendencies of the civilization of the United States over the past two centuries. As such, it springs from several sources. The conceptual framework of many of these critics rests upon the older work of Louis Hartz, who some years ago worked out the implications of the fact that the American colonies were settled at a particular point in the evolution of European political culture. What was an emerging liberal ideology in the parent culture, he argued, became in the American "fragment culture" the only ideological tradition. As a result, all of American life has been enveloped in a liberal framework so pervasive that we as a people do not even realize it.

The anger underlying this radical critique, on the other hand, has its roots in the past decade's widespread perception of deep and apparently intractable evils within America: persistent unemployment, discrimination, and poverty in the world's richest economy, unrestrained corporate power in a nominally pluralistic society, and a national-security bureaucracy gradually eroding the foundations of a constitutional republic. For a smaller but not insignificant number of Americans (including, obviously, these critics) those evils are not unrelated but constitute aspects of a single crisis. This is not the place nor I the author to argue either the validity of these specific perceptions or the more general sense of crisis to which they are related. But within this space we can at least raise the following questions: to what extent are these evils inextricably connected to liberal America, to either the constitutional order or to the society which it reinforces? Do the frightening episodes of the recent past, in other words, represent clear betrayals of the national liberal tradition, weaknesses within that tradition, or (as some of these critics would surely argue) liberalism's fulfillment? Would an America organized on different principles be able to avoid existing evils, or would such an alternative present even greater dangers of its own? And, after almost two centuries of uninterrupted liberal hegemony, are there any realistic possibilities for such an alternative?

I

We can try to answer some of these questions by first of all clarifying this radical indictment of liberalism. We are helped in this effort by the recent appearance of two finely-argued critiques: Frank M. Coleman's *Hobbes and America: Exploring the Constitutional Foundations* (University of Toronto Press $12.50, 160 pp.) and Paul N. Goldstene's *The Collapse of Liberal Empire: Science and Revolution in the Twentieth Century* (Yale University Press $10.00, 139 pp.). Coleman's book is a closely-reasoned analysis of the philosophical origins of the American constitutional order and their implications for American politics. Goldstene's book is a reflective essay on the ongoing American crisis and its relationship to the national liberal tradition. Nonetheless their analyses converge at important points and ultimately complement each other. Coleman, for example, shares Goldstene's definition of the problem: "the despair and lost sense of purpose which currently pervade the American order are . . . manifestations of a liberal logic unfolding." Only by confronting "the facts and implications of its own liberalism," can America begin to deal rationally with its present situation. Conversely, Goldstene would probably support Coleman's statement that the origins of the problem lie in the constitutional order, or what Coleman terms "a constitutional philosophy" which forms "the consciousness of a whole people through their national inheritance" and "establishes the goals which will be pursued in the national political context."

The historical importance of the American constitutional order lies in what Gordon Wood calls its "total grounding of government in self-interest and consent." Most recent historians have emphasized the evolution of the element of consent, or what might be called the "republican" element, and understandably so, for it was this idea of "government . . . deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed" that was such an innovation in the eighteenth-century world. But the historians' preoccupation with a uniquely American "republicanism" leads them to ignore the emerging assumptions of the wider Anglo-American political culture, one of which was the "liberal" element of self-interest. For political scientists like Coleman and Goldstene who emphasize this element, how-

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ever, the United States Constitution takes on added significance. Under their interpretation, the intellectual achievement embodied in the Constitution lies not only in its fear of the tyranny of concentrated power (which goes back to classical antiquity) nor even in its acceptance of the more recent discovery that "the many" in a republic can be as actively oppressive as "the one" in a monarchy. Rather, it comes from the Constitution's guiding assumption that only by institutionalizing the self-interest of the leaders, on the one hand, and of the individual citizens, on the other, could such tyranny be averted.

For Coleman the origins of this "liberal" element in the Constitution—the idea that since self-interest is the main principle of human action, even republican governments must be based upon it—are contained in the thought of the seventeenth-century iconoclast, Thomas Hobbes. For Coleman (and for many other students of political theory) Hobbes is the first great liberal thinker in the modern world. First of all, Coleman argues, Hobbes broke decisively with the older natural-law tradition and made the individual the sole source of authority. Since individuals are perpetually in conflict with each other (as anyone who has ever heard of Hobbes knows) they are led, on the basis of their own self-interest, to delegate some of their authority to "the sovereign" in order to ensure the protection of their common security and their individual pursuits. But—and this is Coleman's other main point about Hobbes's "liberalism"—the functions of "the sovereign" are limited to the preservation of order. "The sovereign" could not attempt to impose an ideal pattern of values since, according to Hobbes, none exists. And, given the human propensity for conflict, a prudent sovereign would be well advised to seek the preservation of order through the management of conflict rather than through its total repression, for such repression might well drive self-interested individuals to calculate the advantages of rebellion.

With a number of modifications, this individualistic framework, established by Hobbes, was transmitted to the American colonies by John Locke. By the time Madison was writing his defense of the Constitution he could regard it as self-evident that "the causes of faction are thus sown into the nature of man," and since those causes cannot realistically be eliminated without destroying liberty itself, only their effects can be controlled. Therefore, he concludes in the tenth of the *Federalist* essays, the chief advantage of an extended republic is that aggregates of self-interested individuals will find it difficult to interfere with the right of others to pursue their self-interest. The American "constitutional philosophy," Coleman believes, agrees with Hobbes in two important ways: first, that the "only possible source of public authority is the private need of independently situated political actors, each of whom is vested with a . . . right to act according to self-defined standards of conscience and interest," and second, that the only legitimate function of "the sovereign" is the preservation of order through the management of conflict between such individuals.

A society of self-interested individuals, reinforced in the pursuit of their self-interest by their "constitutional philosophy," suffers the moral and social consequences of fragmentation.

While Coleman is primarily concerned with the individualistic assumptions of the American constitutional order, Goldstene concentrates on the attitudes toward power which result from them. Unlike other ideologies, Goldstene argues, liberalism assumes an eternal human failure to achieve ultimate harmony. It structures its argument around the polarities of human reason, which makes the constitutional establishment of rights necessary, and human passion, which makes governmental violation of those rights inevitable. "The liberal advocates the advancement of reason by placing the improvement and protection of rights in the hands of a state which comprises the greatest danger to rights and hence to reason itself." For Goldstene, the early modern origins of liberalism are not so much Hobbesian or Lockean as Newtonian; the eighteenth-century fascination with the physical laws of action and reaction produced the American Constitution, the major attempt to actually construct a Newtonian polity, to replicate the laws of the universe in the framing of government by balancing power against power. For Goldstene the Constitution is "the outstanding work of liberal genius" because it assumes that since each individual is a creature of passion as well as of reason, each "contains a tyrannical disposition that can only be controlled by the existence of the identical disposition in another," and because it then tries to structure government around such dispositions.

For both Coleman and Goldstene the liberal constitutional order of the United States, with its structural balancing of power against power and its theoretical foundations in a doctrine of individualism, is directly connected to the crisis of contemporary America. Not only is it difficult to implement policy in a government of separate institutions sharing power, a point many others have made; but, they would argue, such policy cannot truly be *public* policy, because as Goldstene

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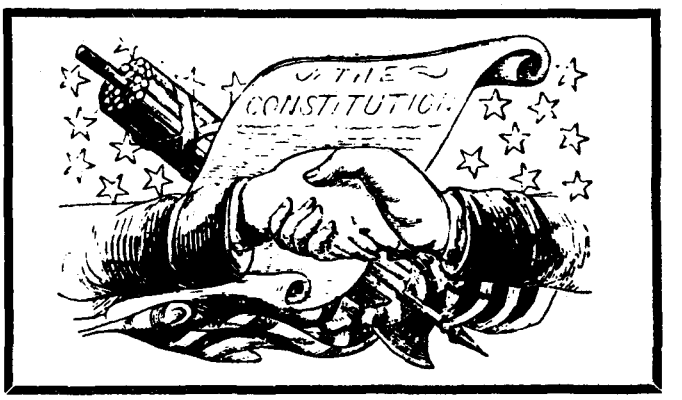
says, "there can be no public policy if there is no conception of public interest, and this cannot exist" under a liberal order in which society is seen as "nothing more than the aggregate of individuals comprising it." And, as Coleman would add, the constitutional assumption that each of those individuals acts mainly out of self-interest "has turned out to be self-fulfilling because the institutions designed upon this principle tend to produce the behavior that is predicted."

Having portrayed an American society without any real public, however, the authors begin to diverge in important ways. Coleman's conclusions are perhaps the easiest to describe: a society of self-interested individuals, reinforced in the pursuit of their self-interest by their "constitutional philosophy," suffers the moral and social consequences of fragmentation. At one level, he notes, American history is continually marked by agrarian unrest, labor violence, and urban riots, but in each case violence as a form of protest came from individuals who felt that the pursuit of their self-interest was somehow thwarted; as a result our history has produced both spasms of furious action outside the political system and a recurrent unwillingness to challenge its basic principles. On another level, the political system is continually prone to corruption because a "constitutional philosophy" which bases public order on the private need of the citizens is incapable of protecting public resources from the private gain of the leaders. And on still another level, the current social problems that confront America spring directly from the inherent inability of the system to curb individual self-interest: we cannot begin to make our central cities habitable, Coleman maintains, without overcoming the prevalent assumption that "every American has the right to own and operate an automobile, to own a free-standing house on a half-acre of land, and to be provided with an expressway to his place of work."

If for Coleman liberalism is at the root of the crisis, for Goldstene it is only part of the crisis; in his view American liberalism is less responsible for shaping present realities than for refusing to recognize them. This blindness of a liberal society comes from its "need to pluralize the universe" and create separate realms of "politics, economics, and personality, realms held to be distinct in fact as well as in conception." According to classical liberal doctrine, the realm of personality is private and its rights must be protected; the realm of politics is public and its dangers of abuse must be contained; but the realm of economics has, ever since liberalism's inception, been placed nearer that of personality, so that economic policy has been more a matter of protecting rights than a matter of containing power. Under the original liberal formulation, the problem of power did not exist in the economic realm, because only the market could exert such control in the most immediate sense of determining prices. When, at various points in the twentieth century, liberal spokesmen began to perceive that the market was not in fact controlling economic power, they could only fall back upon—and the liberal American electorate would only accept—an attempt to apply the balancing schemes of liberal politics to the economic realm. Especially since the 1930s, liberal policy has therefore emphasized the organization of farmers, workers, and (less successfully) consumers into blocs to counter corporate power, "to correct the natural tendency of capitalism to lose its inner balance and . . . to avoid the tyranny which must result." But Goldstene believes that such attempts at balance have failed to recognize that the evolution of the modern corporation has rendered the original liberal calculus obsolete. Bureaucratic structure, technological innovation, the artificial creation of demand through advertising, dependence on government spending—all these, he argues, have changed corporations from independent centers of power into



a system whose pattern of authority and whose scope cannot even be defined. The present corporate reality "is no longer the world of Locke. It is a world of Kafka. . . ."

The emerging corporate system is directly connected to a second reality which liberalism refuses to recognize, that of empire. Liberal America, he maintains, has had its own expansionist tendencies (the "manifest destiny" of the nineteenth century, for example), but contemporary American foreign policy is primarily the result of pressure by "enormous aggregates of venture capital seeking profitable outlets." In the years of American hegemony in the two decades after 1945, corporate access to foreign markets was generally perceived as producing national economic growth and a rising standard of living for individual Americans. But the decline of the American empire beginning in the mid-1960s has led to economic contraction, producing simultaneous inflation and unemployment, and forcing the corporations to become even more dependent on government spending for war. As the struggle over domestic resources becomes acute, Americans begin to suspect that economic and political power are now merged, partners in domination, and that the old

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liberal balance has failed. The traditional liberal response to power is simply irrelevant, Goldstene concludes, "when pitted against a corporate octopus of scope and dimension beyond the classical imagination."

II

However detailed it may be, a critique of liberalism is insufficient; in order to gain a meaningful perspective, we must have some sense of what alternative ideologies might be, of what they would entail in practice. The two authors just discussed are not very helpful: Coleman because he does not even address himself to the problem of alternatives, and Goldstene because he names them without really describing them. Nevertheless, even the listing of alternatives—for Goldstene, "conservatism," "liberalism" and "democracy"—can be useful, especially when he implies a contrast between "liberalism" and an essentially elitist "conservatism." "Conservatives," he suggests at one point, believe that as long as "the proper elite is in control . . . no interference with its rule should be allowed . . . because all who might check the elite are, by definition, less than elite."

Radical critics other than Goldstene are more interested in contrasting "liberalism" with "democracy," though they, too, are not very specific about what they mean. That they favor what they call "democracy" is clear from even a cursory reading of their work; but it is equally clear that they, like Goldstene, do not regard the American polity as "democratic." For these critics, then, "democracy" is not what most people take it to be, not majoritarian but egalitarian, not representative but participatory. One might almost say that for many of them "democracy" is nothing less than the self-government of a community of equals. Though some of them use an essentially Marxist framework of analysis, the spirit which broods over almost all their political theory is not so much that of Marx as that of Rousseau. They would accept, one feels, the conditions which Rousseau imposes as necessary for a truly democratic government in Book III of *The Social Contract*: "a very small state," "great simplicity of manners," and "a large measure of equality in rank and fortune." And they would also probably agree with Rousseau's assumption that a consciousness of community must precede attempts at self-government, and some even seem to concur with his view that representative government is a sign of political decay. Placing this definition of "democracy" next to Goldstene's definition of "conservatism," we might formulate the following statement: "conservatives" trust "the elite"; "democrats" trust "the people"; "liberals" trust no one, neither "the one, the few, or the many."

Undoubtedly both Coleman and Goldstene regard the question of alternatives to liberalism as irrelevant since they both assume that America has been and will always be liberal. But their specific implication that the individualist philosophy of Hobbes and Locke was transplanted to the New World and soon became the unchallenged American liberal ideology is open to question. In fact, during the period which saw the shaping of the American constitutional order, from about 1776 to about 1816, "liberalism" had to struggle for ideological hegemony both with what Goldstene would call "conservatism" and with what other radical critics would call "democracy." Liberalism, to remind ourselves of Goldstene's interpretation, assumes a perpetual tension, between reason and passion within the individual, and between different self-interested individuals; in that sense, Madison was clearly the most articulate and perceptive defender of liberalism at this crucial point in our history. Goldstene further argues, however, that in contrast with "liberals," both "conservatives" and "democrats" assume the possibility of an ultimate harmony within individuals and between them, whether through acceptance of natural law (in the one case) or the general will (in the other). To rephrase his distinction in specifically political terms, both "conservatives" and "democrats" assume the existence of a real public interest. The probability that, during the shaping of the American constitutional order, representatives of both groups would therefore disagree with Madison has already been suggested by Cecilia Kenyon, and we can reformulate her argument in the terms we have been using. In the 1790s Madison, the pre-eminent "liberal" republican, was challenged by what we would call "conservative" defenders of the public interest, "conservative" republicans who agreed with Alexander Hamilton that the public interest could be realized through the decisions of a disinterested elite. At an earlier point, in the conflicts preceding the Constitution, on the other hand, Madison had been opposed by what we would call "democratic" defenders of a public interest, "democratic" republicans who agreed with Thomas Paine that the public interest could be realized through the participation of the entire community.

The current social problems that confront America spring directly from the inherent inability of the system to curb individual self-interest.

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Now students of political theory would agree that a philosophy such as Madison's which accepts the management of conflict as the major end of government also accepts (in fact, stems from) the proposition that the pursuit of self-interest is the predominant motivation of human beings. It is moderately pessimistic in its expectations, but (as the logic of Hobbes reveals) also relativistic in its assumptions: individuals are the best judges, indeed the only judges of their self-interest. A philosophy which accepts the pursuit of the public interest as the major end of government, in contrast, insofar as it operates within a republican framework at all, must assume that the pursuit of the common good (or what the eighteenth century called "virtue") is at least a major motivation of human beings. In its optimistic code this philosophy can assume, as Paine initially seems to have done, that individuals are in fact pursuing the common good, but it is more likely that it will be pessimistic and at any given point assume that too many individuals are not pursuing the common good. Because of its inherent absolutism—its belief that there really is a public interest out there—this philosophy tends to lead to the conclusion that individuals must be *encouraged* by the government to pursue the common good. The major aim of the governmental pursuit of the public interest is thus allied with the subsidiary aim of governmental promotion of individual virtue. And the aim of promoting virtue has in turn led, theoretically and historically, to the implementation of specific measures, very much the same measures again and again.

Rousseau may indeed be—as some of his contemporary admirers would claim—the first major "democratic" thinker, but he was more pessimistic about the chances for what he called "democracy" than is often realized. He assumed, as we have seen, that democracy was dependent on "a very small state," "great simplicity of manners," and "a large measure of equality in rank and fortune"; but he also assumed that virtue was "the fundamental principle of republics; for all these conditions could not exist without virtue." And he was not convinced that virtue would persist without encouragement, so he favored both the institution of censorship to preserve individual morality, and the creation of a simple "civil religion," over and above the various competing faiths, to preserve social unity. It is not necessary to lay at poor Rousseau's doorstep the assorted horrors of twentieth-century totalitarianism to see in his ideal polity certain repressive tendencies, tendencies best illustrated not by the spawn of charismatic dictators in our own time but by the age-old tendencies of self-governing communities toward the coercive imposition of uniformity. Such repressive tendencies may well be inherent in any attempt to construct a polity on the concept of a public interest.

Surveying the American experience, it is not easy to find durable communities that meet Rousseau's criteria for "democracy": in the major examples that do come to mind, from the Puritan settlements in seventeenth-century New England to the Mormon settlements in the nineteenth-century West, social equality was (as he foresaw) linked to ethnic and cultural homogeneity. But even in these truly self-constituted communities what began as a homogeneity resting on consensus soon became a homogeneity resting on coercion and exclusion; eventually, these communities founded to preserve a way of life became aggressive missionaries trying to impose that way of life on the wider national culture. Some of the radical critics who now champion community self-government should be reminded of these expansionist impulses. Those who would now argue for the right of homogeneous populations to exclude others from their community might remember that it was similar motivations that culminated in the Know-Nothing movement in the 1850s and the resurgence of the Ku Klux Klan in the 1920s. It is also difficult to find much historical evidence to support the belief of some of these critics that dissent is compatible with the kind of polities they would call "democratic." It is odd, for example, to read a pacifist like Staughton Lynd complain that Madison's liberalism helped create "a closed society," when it was Madison who wanted to incorporate directly into the Bill of Rights an amendment that "no person religiously scrupulous of bearing arms shall be compelled to render military service in person." From a reading of American history at least, it is hard not to conclude that polities dedicated to the common good tend to be repressive, and one can appreciate Madison's insight that the rights of conscience are most likely to be protected in a polity premised on self-interest.

Communities can preserve their ethnic and cultural homogeneity, at whatever cost to individual freedom, but they cannot so easily preserve their other essential "democratic" condition, social equality, for the sources of inequality come from a system of stratification outside their control. Thus the radicals' alternative to "liberalism," what they call the "democracy" of a self-governing community, is not only potentially repressive but is incapable of resisting the systemic tendencies toward social inequality and economic exploitation which concern them the most. One might think that, given these critics' image of an America dominated by unrestrained power, they would seek to build national institutions to challenge that power. But on the whole that is not the case. They reveal minimal enthusiasm for (and in some cases, actual hostility to) the existing institutions developed to restrain power: not only the framework established under the eighteenth-century Constitution, but also the mass political parties coming from the nineteenth century, and the plurality of interest groups established in the twentieth. Fixated on

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their "democratic" ideal of community self-government, the radical critics of liberalism offer few comparable alternatives. Insofar as they reject parties and interest groups as part of the problem, "liberal" aggregates of self-interest within a deeply flawed constitutional order, their remedies never quite match the scale of their indictment. Aware that "the actual structures of power grow ever more into an international system" (in Richard Sennett's phrase), they nevertheless persist in championing localism, with the result that their grass-roots solutions tend to fall behind their worldwide apocalypses.

III

Among these recent radical critics of American liberalism, Goldstene appears to stand almost alone. While he devotes the greater part of *The Collapse of Liberal Empire* to describing the inadequacy of liberalism in the face of corporate and imperial realities, he is not willing to abandon a central liberal proposition: that power must be balanced by power. And while he believes it a matter of the greatest urgency that Americans accept the fact that they are a liberal people and confront the problems arising from that fact, he doubts whether Americans will ever abandon their liberal tradition to the degree which the radical advocates of "democracy" deem necessary. As Goldstene implies, the liberal tradition undoubtedly has sources of authority which will help sustain it in moments of crisis. But insofar as the current crisis has eroded liberal foundations, a point about which its academic critics have made so much, it is not the discordant set of repressive and egalitarian impulses which they call "democracy" that will most likely replace liberalism. It is what we have called "conservatism." The old Hamiltonian conception of a public interest imposed by an ostensibly disinterested elite is currently enjoying a resurgence, for several reasons. In the first place, as Goldstene (and behind him, J. K. Galbraith) has argued, the traditional capitalism which historically arose with liberalism is now dead, having been transformed into a corporate system. In the second place, as the continuing revelations about the CIA graphically reveal, our liberal republic has gradually acquired the attributes of an imperial state. For those who accept them as inevitable, these emerging corporate and imperial realities require not only the concentration of decision-making power at the highest levels, but also the imposition of stability on an inherently conflict-ridden liberal order, two needs which contemporary neo-Hamiltonian theorists such as Samuel P. Huntington have clearly articulated.

For this reason, if for no other, Goldstene's decision to seek liberal remedies to liberal dilemmas, to rescue liberalism from itself, remains philosophically and tactically sound. His own specific remedy in the final portions of his book, is spun from threads of argument scattered earlier throughout it. His first argument emphasizes abundance: it is abundance, he maintains, which has sustained liberal ideology and corporate power for so long in America. But that abundance has been made possible only by modern technology; and following in the tradition of Thorstein Veblen, Goldstene believes that technological progress is separable from corporate development and that those who control that technology are more vital to society than those who control the corporation. His second argument is that abundance creates its own forms of discontent, because it challenges traditional assumptions about the scarcity of resources. Abundance produces classes of individuals whose yearning for self-actualization leads them to act on their sense that they are being exploited by concentrations of corporate and imperial power. Again, this insight is hardly novel: it has formed a central theme in the social criticism of the last ten years.

The decision to seek liberal remedies to liberal dilemmas, to rescue liberalism from itself, remains philosophically and tactically sound.

What is novel about Goldstene's analysis is the way he integrates these two arguments on the sources of abundance and on the discontent it produces. It is not only the heritage of abundance that shapes our condition today, he says, but the increasing disparity between the dreams of abundance and confining economic realities. In America at present, "opportunity declines . . . at the precise instant that the pressure for entry becomes greater, more anxious, and more intense." This crisis calls for a new liberal theory which starts from the premise that traditional capitalism is dead and that the emerging corporate system is incompatible not only with the constitutional order but with the welfare of the American people. Those who can most appropriately provide the new element of balance this theory requires are scientists, because "scientific discovery . . . underlies a technological civilization." The scientists' centrality in technological development gives them potential power; their struggle with the corporate system over the shrinking resources of a collapsing empire gives them the motivation to assert that power. The individual political orientations of scientists are irrelevant, Goldstene asserts in good Madisonian fashion; it

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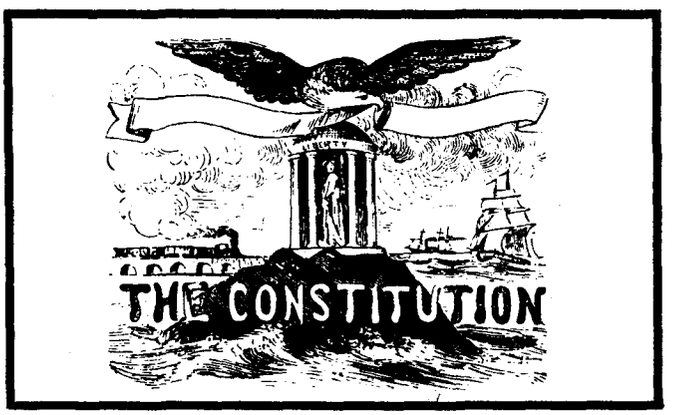
is their self-interest which will lead them to assert themselves.

Goldstene's argument here raises a number of questions. His thesis—that the present disparity between dreams of abundance and the realities of constraint will heighten societal contradictions—is not totally convincing. It is equally likely that such a disparity will lead to mass passivity and individual neurosis. Similarly, his belief that the values of scientists, the resources of the university, and the self-actualizing tendencies of students will somehow come together to challenge the corporate system has a somewhat wistful quality to it, especially in the context of the academic malaise of the late 1970s. But Goldstene's framework transcends his specific argument and can be used (very much like Madison's, in fact) by groups and institutions he has not considered. And he is surely right in arguing that the need to create new balances of power and the need to articulate new kinds of self-interest become more urgent with each expansion of the corporate system.

It should be clear that strengthening the liberal order in the face of emerging corporate and imperial realities will require a good deal of effort. Consoling ourselves with the more hopeful aspects of the recent past is not enough. The constitutional system's ability to maintain freedom by balancing official ambition against ambition may have been vindicated by Nixon's removal; but the self-congratulatory rhetoric of Washington "insiders" notwithstanding, its continued ability to do so in the future is by no means assured. The current civil-libertarian effort to protect individuals against the abuse of power by petty tyrants in schools, hospitals and prisons (as well as by megalomaniacs in the White House and their agents in the FBI and the CIA) is a significant development in the advancement of freedom; yet a preoccupation with the most defenseless groups in the population seems ultimately insufficient as a liberal remedy. For as Madison himself came to realize, the preservation of freedom cannot solely be maintained by skilled lawyers, principled judges or even competition between ambitious politicians; it must, at some point, engage the deepest sentiments of the people. Or, in a more precise liberal formulation, such a defense must appeal to the self-interest of sizable aggregates (or "factions") within the population.

What is needed therefore is the remedy toward which Goldstene's framework points us: the creation of new coalitions based on self-interest and directed toward restraining power. That kind of remedy may seem obvious, but any assertion of the necessity for such coalitions must confront a number of recently fashionable solutions to our present dilemmas. In the past decade both the erosion of the major political parties and the surge in racial and ethnic group-consciousness have been justified, often by the radical critics of liberation, as part of "a rejection of hierarchy," "a search for community," and the result of "an expanded consciousness." But neither of these developments seems to have had much effect on reducing existing social and economic inequality; and they may in fact have strengthened the corporate system. It is still not clear what will replace the traditional political parties as instruments of coalition-building; and the current emphasis on a vague group-consciousness makes all the less likely that assertion of concrete self-interest which participation in any coalition requires.

A call for the creation of new coalitions might seem, in view of the radical indictment of liberal America, an insufficient response, a superficial solution to a grave defect in the system. Even if they did maintain freedom, some might ask, can either the assertion of self-interest or the restraint of power bring us any closer to an approximation of justice? To that question a pessimist might reply that the future is not totally indeterminate, that we as a people are what our history has made us, and that our liberalism probably precludes any radically egalitarian policies. But, an optimist might add, it does not follow that the liberal order offers no remedies at



all to the problems of inequality. For the most obvious injustices within the American polity may well stem from the fact that too many Americans, disproportionately those from lower-income groups, are either unsure about their self-interest or discouraged from organizing in its pursuit. And if that is so, then encouraging those individuals to find their self-interest and organize themselves, on the way to entering larger coalitions, is not only logical but fully consonant with the American liberal tradition.

Such a liberal remedy will certainly not reduce conflict, which is precisely why contemporary "conservative" spokesmen view it with such alarm; nor will it create the harmonious community of which many contemporary radical "democrats" dream. But in a world in which freedom faces such an uncertain future, such a liberal remedy can help maintain freedom and even extend it to individuals hitherto excluded from its promise. And that perhaps is as much that we as a liberal people can reasonably expect.

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'I AM FREE AS A PRIEST TO MARRY'

ADRIAN HASTINGS

After twenty-two years, some reflections on celibacy

After much thought and prayer I have come to the decision that I am free as a Catholic priest to marry. I have come to this after long years of wrestling with myself and of pondering both the pastoral and missionary needs of the church and the basic nature of the Christian priesthood, marriage and freedom. I have for years argued persistently for a major change in the church's position in this regard, a change which I see as absolutely crucial for the wider effectiveness and coherence of the *aggiornamento* set in motion by Pope John. It is only recently that I have come to the conclusion that in this matter as in others one cannot go on indefinitely simply affirming in print and in speech a point of view completely at odds with the structured ordering of one's own life. There comes a moment when it is morally necessary to pin oneself to the truth and importance of what one has affirmed to be true and important.

I have been a priest for twenty-two-years. I accepted the obligation of celibacy at ordination without questioning because I wished to be a priest and this was the law of the church, and I have kept it. In the cheerful, zealous, withdrawn atmosphere of a seminary it did not seem much of a problem. I was even convinced for a time that I did not want to marry, but for many years now I have wanted to very much. So this decision is first of all a response to an honest sense of my own need. Yet at present I am living happily with my mother; I have many dear friends, and I am extremely busy as a university lecturer and writer. I have certainly not come to this decision out of loneliness or depression or because I have lost interest in the church or the Catholic priesthood. Quite the contrary.

I first became firmly convinced that the church needed to change its discipline about fifteen years ago and so I wrote in the *African Ecclesiastical Review* of October 1964 urging 'the widespread ordination of tried and tested married men, such as the better trained catechists, to provide the Eucharist and the simple preaching of the Gospel." From then on I have repeated this appeal time after time in every way open to me, explaining at great lengths the grounds for it (see, for instance, the *Clergy Review*, January-March 1973; the *Tablet* 8 and 15 May, 1976), but over the years I have seen that what I first asked for was certainly not enough. Reasons which called for a married priesthood appeared to my mind of an ever wider and more compelling kind but for long I continued to hold that, whatever my personal inclinations, I must myself remain celibate precisely to put the case. Thus on 5th October 1969 I copied down a remark of Von Hugel's into my diary: "Whatever one may think, *in abstracto*, of celibacy, a priest who abandons it puts himself out of court for pleading for the difficult reforms we require." Hard as it might be to order one's own life by a rule one did not believe in, I was for long firmly convinced that in practice this settled the matter for me. On this. after almost interminable internal debate, I have changed my mind: partly because I am tired of having my own life controlled by a clericalism I detest; partly because verbal argument alone, however clearly put, is very easily disregarded by the powers that be. The very absence of democracy within the church as it stands drives one from disregarded argumentation to deeds that may not be so easily forgotten.

I have recently celebrated the 22nd anniversary of my ordination and the 40th of my first communion. I made that communion at Stanbrook Abbey on the feast of Our Lady's birthday, the 8th September 1937. On its fortieth anniversary I was back at Stanbrook to thank God for all those years of receiving and communicating the Body of Christ, that food in whose strength I have walked for forty years. And in doing so I felt a profound sense of reassurance. These have been the central things in my life. From them, I do not, will not, could not, withdraw.

How then could I break a law of the church forbidding me to marry, a law which I accepted with full consciousness when I was ordained in 1955? Because I do not believe it to be a just law or a good law, or a law which the church had the right to make, and I am convinced that it does not express God's will for the church today, if it ever did. Positive law is not to be despised but equally it is not to be idolized, and this applies very much indeed to canon law which is often made and enforced in a very arbitrary manner. Law is for man, not man for it. I am the son and the grandson of lawyers, and I have always held human law in the greatest respect; but the free, conscientious,

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non-violent breaking of a law which is itself proving harmful and destructive, can be a valuable and redeeming action. So, at least, it would seem to me the Christ of the gospels teaches us. I accepted the law of compulsory priestly celibacy when young as an expression of God's will; convinced today that it is, on the contrary, a grave disservice to the Kingdom, I can contemplate breaking it without any sense of failing in fidelity to the God who has guarded, guided and blessed me all the days of my life.

The practicalities of this decision have been helped by the fact that I am now a university lecturer in religious studies. As a missionary of sorts, an itinerant minister, there were very good reasons to be celibate, and I could hold freely to my celibacy because it made much sense in terms of the work I was actually given. That period of my life has now passed. As a university lecturer marriage appears as appropriate as celibacy did for a traveler living mostly far from his native land and on next to no salary. If the church had given me other responsibilities I would not have wished to abandon them lightly and so let people down who depended on my immediate ministry, but it did not do so. As a consequence I find I have the responsibility instead to use my freedom in a way most other priests cannot do, to say something utterly vital about the priesthood without the likelihood of being immediately crushed.

I intend then, whether or not I marry, to continue with the grace of God to be a priest in the depths of my being and to serve as such as God guides me. That service has long been chiefly one of teaching through writing, and so it will continue. I have not the slightest desire to divide the church sacramentally. There are in fact recognized married priests in the Catholic Church today, as there always have been, so there can as such be no scandal in a married man celebrating Mass. But I will certainly not do so except when I am truly wanted and such celebration is not divisive.

What, then, objectively are my reasons for taking this very grave decision? The first reason, and still for me in a way the clearest, is the simple and decisive one of the pastoral needs of the church. The church is centered on the Mass. The Eucharistic Body of Christ builds up the Mystical Body of Christ. No theology is more traditional and nothing was stressed more repeatedly by the Second Vatican Council. It has, ever since my doctoral thesis in Rome in the 1950s, been central to my own theology (see *One and Apostolic*, London and New York, 1963; *A Concise Guide to the Documents of the Second Vatican Council*, volume I, 1968). The whole weight of Catholic tradition and spirituality cries out for the celebration of the Lord's Supper on the Lord's Day in every Christian community. But this, as I experienced over long years in Africa. has become utterly impossible because of the great and growing lack of priests. It is not that there are not devoted people, trained ministers of the church, available. There are. In Africa, for instance, the church has many thousands of capable catechists, but they are married. The celebration of Mass in rural Africa today, despite the quickly growing number of Catholics, is an increasingly rare event. Many bishops have seen this absolutely clearly and have appealed to the Pope time after time for permission to ordain married men "to answer the most elementary pastoral needs" (the joint hierarchies of Gabon, Chad, the Central African Republic, Congo-Brazza and Cameroon in July 1969). One bishop I know went year after year to plead for this in Rome always to be faced with the same hard refusal, though he had not a single ordained local priest in his diocese. The Pope, it seems, prefers that there be no Mass for countless people than that Mass be said by a married man, and so no Mass there is. It is spiritually very comfortable for me to go on saying my Mass in common with all the priests and bishops in their private chapels who are never deprived for a day of the Eucharist, but I have found it increasingly impossible to accept such an identification with the clerical "haves."

All this is equally true and has very long been true of Latin America. Today it is also becoming the case in many parts of France and Germany. Whatever the underlying reasons the consequence is to reveal ever more clearly an order of priorities dominated by a clericalism which sees the maintenance of universal priestly celibacy as more important than the basic pastoral and missionary needs of the church. Such a state of affairs has become in my opinion a scandal of the highest order.

But the pastoral needs of today's church by no means end there. Despite pressure from Rome through the ages the Eastern Uniate Churches have managed to maintain their ancient tradition of a married clergy to this day. However, millions of Uniates have emigrated from Eastern Europe to America and there they have been forbidden to continue this tradition and so have been alienated and frequently driven into schism. Again in the last years since the Council there have been deep conflicts between Rome and the Melkites and Ukrainian Catholics, and these largely relate to the refusal of Rome to allow a married clergy to develop in North America. Such a policy damages the tribute the Vatican Council paid to the Eastern Churches, produces a constant open wound within the church, and also counteracts any further ecumenical proposal to bring Anglicans or Protestants into full communion with the Catholic Church on some sort of uniate model. Papal pronouncements about the acceptance of the legitimate rights and traditions of other churches as part of the process of achieving full communion seem little more than double-talk when within the Catholic Church as already constituted, a married clergy, characteristic of all other denominations, is so consistently

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resisted by authority. One cannot reasonably offer with one hand what one is refusing with the other.

Again there are the lands where the church is, and for many years has been, under persecution. In such countries it can be quite impossible to provide a celibate clergy only ordainable after long years of traditional seminary formation. As the priests of the diocese of Vilkaviskis, Lithuania, movingly petitioned their bishops in December 1968: "The present seminary is obviously unable to fulfill the needs of the Lithuanian Catholic Church. Therefore a well-justified question arises: Who in the near future will proclaim God's Word? Who will give the sacraments? Who will officiate at the Mass?" If the law of universal priestly celibacy remains in force, the answer to those questions may well be "No one."

Here in Britain there are now scores of priests who have married but wish to continue their ministry. In France there are hundreds, "*prêtres en foyer*" they call them and many are saying Mass while the bishops avert their eyes. These are good men, some of them were among the best and ablest of the clergy, men who often enough went out with a quite special zeal to preach the Word and serve the needy in a secular world far away from that of the presbytery. It is a wretched experience to see one's friends leave the ministry and the bishops do next to nothing about it.

My conclusion is a simple one: in Britain, France and Germany, in Lithuania, among the Melkites in North America, in Africa, in Latin America, wherever one turns the clericalism which puts celibacy above ministry is strangling the church.

Yet there is absolutely no reliable theological argument upon which to base a general law of priestly celibacy. (This is, maybe, why there is no such law: there is something particularly untheological about a general law of celibacy *within the Latin rite.*) There are, most certainly, strong grounds for the recognition of the spiritual and practical value of celibacy as a freely chosen state for some who are called to it. Essentially this means members of religious orders, women or men, and the differentiation of "religious" from the "secular" or "diocesan" clergy is one of the most enduring characteristics, and strengths, of Catholic ministry. Yet the value of that differentiation has been eroded by imposing celibacy, a characteristic of religious life, upon the whole priesthood by law and by nothing else than law. There is nothing in Scripture, nothing in the early church, nothing in the sound tradition of Catholic theology to justify this law. It grew largely out of a growing but heretical belief that sex was somehow of itself impure and that therefore even sex blessed in the sacrament of marriage was deeply unsuitable for an ordained priest administering the holy things of God. Yet God in Christ took to himself in principle the total *humanum*, all that is not sin. The religion of the Incarnation is not a religion of withdrawal but a religion of holiness within the "flesh" of humanity. Priests must, in a very special way, represent the balance of Christ's message. If sex is necessarily sinful, then the marriage theology of the Church as it is taught today is nonsense. If it is not sinful but is, indeed, a central if difficult area of human growth and moral striving, then it seems impossible for it to be right that all Christian priests opt out—be compelled to opt out—of the totality of marital relations and parental responsibilities.

This means, not only that there is no sound argument against a married clergy, but that there is a decisive positive argument in favor of a married clergy, if the Gospel is not to be twisted. The need is particularly pressing in our time. Marriage has always been with us but in the past there was a relatively stable society with agreed moral norms so that it could appear possible for the clergy to preach about situations fairly effectively even though they were never involved in them. Today this is simply not the case and if priests as a body are outside whole areas of life they can have next to nothing to say about them. Even if Pope Paul was right in his condemnation of all artificial forms of contraception, a clergy which has only to face the issues academically will never be able to convince a doubting laity. If then the clergy are as a whole to remain celibate, the consequence can only be (and is already) an ever growing marginalization of the priesthood, a disastrous withdrawal into the limited fields of ritual and fund-raising.

There is simply no way apart from a married priesthood whereby a clerically controlled church can credibly demonstrate that it does not still regard the sacrament of marriage as at least one stage removed from the way of perfection. We need married priests not because marriage is easy and celibacy too hard for us, but because marriage is hard and at the same time the normal arena for the practice of Christian virtue, including asceticism, while celibacy—unless it be linked with a really vigorous self-discipline all along the line—can easily become a way of life with very little moral challenge to it; too heavily compensated for by drink, overseas holidays, hours before the television set, and a generally rather egotistical pattern of off-duty behavior, very different from that required of the family man. Of course there are scores of priests to whom this does not apply, but there is too much truth in it for celibacy as such to be a convincing proof of self-sacrifice and dedication.

The moral issue here relates to the whole height and depth of Christian spirituality. The point is a very simple one: for Christians one is not less wholly at the service of God because one is at the loving service of another human being, but only if one is not serving but dominating. The essence of the religion of Christ (as opposed to every form of gnostic or manichaean religiosity) is so to love neighbor—wife, husband,

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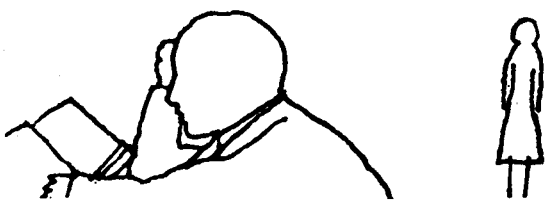
workmates, lepers, the oppressed—that one is indeed loving God and finding God. This central moral insight is immeasurably damaged by a law which compels the whole body of the ordained to opt out from so many relationships which as a consequence are inevitably devalued (as witness the tiny number of canonized saints who were married).

Existentially one can be convinced by this, not only by the lives of so many Catholic laity, including that dearest and wisest of saints Thomas More, but also by calling to mind holy married priests of other communions. When I hear Pope Paul declare a married priesthood an "impossible or illusory" solution, I think of Michael Ramsey and so many other married priests of other churches and I wonder what he can possibly mean.

No less important a consideration is that of the position of women in our society. The church, particularly the post-medieval church, has continually devalued them, excluding them from all roles of im-



portance. To a large extent secular society did the same and while this did not excuse the church, it did in some way reduce the pastoral disadvantage of its all male-mindedness. Today with a profound revolution in the social relationship between the sexes in progress, it becomes more and more anomalous and disastrous that the church be led not just by men only, but by men all of whom have spent their adult lives profoundly segregated from the other sex. It may seem a little thing to female liberationists to argue that at least some of the church's male ministers should have learned to understand the female mind through the wear and tear of married life, yet I cannot doubt that the effect upon the Catholic Church would be vast.

I am not arguing that all priests should ideally be married or that celibacy has no value. On the contrary, I disagree profoundly with the Reformation rejection of value in the life of celibacy. It is vital that freedom from marriage be asserted too—a freedom through which it is possible to attain human fulfillment, holiness and great happiness. I even feel that if it were necessary that all priests should be married or all celibate, I would still very reluctantly prefer the latter; but what we must do is to escape from the oppression of this either/or and return to the both/and which did exist in the early church and is called for by any serious understanding of the diversity of gifts in the body and ministry of Christ.

Celibacy is immensely valuable in a monastic community, in the missionary life, for shock troops in the church's struggle against social injustice, and for certain quieter pastoral roles. But the fact that it is so obviously non-normal requires that here if anywhere the freedom of the Gospel be strikingly manifest. Its true brilliance is horridly dimmed by the shadow of canon law. As a religious option it bears its own witness even to what marriage is all about—the love which transcends all particular forms. As a general clerical obligation it makes the whole splendid biblical analogy between the marriage of man and woman and the union of God and his people almost ridiculous, even a bad joke.

When one challenges the compulsory celibacy of all priests in the Western Catholic Church, one is in truth challenging a development of many centuries, and one which relates not only to the church's attitude towards marriage, women, sex and the priesthood, but also to the whole stress of Roman institutional polity. One must not be blind to the wider ramifications of this. The law of celibacy is a key expression and condition of a particular kind of Latin clericalism and of the grip within the church of men over women, of clergy over laity, of Rome over all. It is a matter of power more than of anything else. Outside the context of Roman centralization it is unlikely that the law of celibacy would ever have been made absolute or maintained as it has. Though it precedes the modern phenomenon of Ultramontanism, it is an essential component of Ultramontanism's predecessors, high Gregorianism and the Counter-Reformation spirit. The tide of clerical celibacy flowed in as part and parcel of the tide of Roman domination over the *Catholica*, and if one is utterly convinced that for the sake of the Catholic Church now more than ever that domination must be decisively challenged and from within, then it would be naive to exclude from that challenge the law of clerical celibacy.

The alternative to Ultramontanism is no less than Catholicity—the joyful recognition that a variety of social and cultural forms are the appropriate body for the realization of the Spirit of God and the Body of Christ, while the reduction of this to a single Roman model is an oppressive caricature of the proper unity of Catholic Christianity. The renewal of the priesthood depends upon its diversification and its emphatic liberation from a manichaean theoretical substructure. Both are impossible while the law of celibacy remains. The task of reconciling Catholic priesthood with Christian marriage is not a giving way to weakness, a concession to worldly times but a challenge to true ministry, to moral endeavor, to prayer and a positive asceticism. Above all it must constitute a never too late recognition within the structures of the church of what the doctrine of the Incarnation is all about—the acceptance of Christian truth at its sharpest, of the coming together of word and flesh.

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HUMAN RIGHTS FOR PEASANTS?

ED MORAN

The roots of violence in El Salvador

In the countryside one can literally feel the fear, anguish and desperation which fills the lives of the peasants. We heard at least 40 separate stories of the murders, the disappearances or the jailing of husbands or sons against whom no charge was brought.—Rep. Robert Drinan (D-Mass.) after a fact-finding trip to El Salvador, January 1978.

* * *

During Holy Week violence broke out in the region of San Pedro Perulapan in El Salvador. The press gave the government version: two peasant organizations, FECCAS (Christian Federation of Salvadorean Peasants) and UTC (Farmworkers Union) had attacked villagers to force them into joining their organization, killing 29 people and forcing 2000 to flee. Catholic Church sources reported a very different story: Some FECCAS leaders had been abducted; when the decapitated body of one was found some peasants captured those considered responsible (members of ORDEN, a government-directed paramilitary group) and forced them to dig a grave and beg forgiveness of the murdered peasant leader. The next day the National Guard arrived, arresting FECCAS leaders.

A high-level fact-finding committee appointed by Archbishop Romero has apparently been unable to do its work because of government harassment. Church sources also report that on March 17 a group of FECCAS-UTC peasants were returning from a fruitless demonstration seeking better conditions for land rental when they were ambushed by troops and shot at from helicopters. Nine were killed, 42 were wounded and several "disappeared."

These incidents—and contradictory versions of them—exemplify the ongoing strife and polarization in El Salvador. This tiny Central American country (4.2 million people, about the size of Massachusetts) normally receives scant attention in the news: it has few resources besides its land and little touristic glamour. U.S. investments are modest albeit significant when seen from the Salvadorean side. Even El Salvador's human rights violations are upstaged by those of South Africa, Argentina and Iran. However, the story deserves attention both for itself and for what it says of U.S. human rights practice to date.

The upper classes and the government seek to capsulize the situation of their country under the rubric of terrorism. Opposition forces, including the Catholic Church, see the problem as a systematic repression of forces proposing basic change. To date the signals sent by the Carter administration seem to reflect the "terrorism" reading.

Inquiry about the roots of violence inevitably leads to land tenure: large landholders produce coffee, sugar, cotton and beef if they have land or can rent it. Statistically, 2 percent of landholders have 60 percent of the arable land while 92 percent of the farmers must divvy up 27 percent of the land. This year El Salvador will export $650 million in coffee. One American said he knew of growers making $4 million extra because of high coffee prices. Yet the peasants must supplement their own farm incomes by working for about $2.20 a day during harvest time. There is an alarming increase in the number of landless peasants: 30,000 in 1960—166,000 in 1975. Another American told me: "Everyone here, even the oligarchy, deep down, knows that some day there has to be land reform." Evidently their attitude is, "Not now and not starting with me."

In 1976 the government proposed a non-radical "Agrarian Transformation" plan: large landholdings would be cut down to 50 acres and owners would be compensated in cash and bonds, with incentives to reinvest in industry; peasants would pay off their lands over a number of years; and the plan would take decades to reach the whole country, at least at its original pace. U.S.A.I.D. was in on the planning and ready to help with financing. Government spokesmen called the plan "an insurance policy for our grandchildren."

The upper classes, however, did not take such a long-range view. Organizations representing landholders and business interests in general (some of them formed *ad hoc*) unleashed a shrill propaganda campaign, especially through paid newspaper ads, and eventually forced the government to take the teeth out of the "Agrarian Transformation."

Since that moment in October 1976 there has been a continuing public conflict between the upper classes

ED MORAN *is the pseudonym of a staff person working with a U.S.-based service organization.*

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and the government, which is now in their hands, and various opposition forces: political parties, peasant organizations, labor unions, the Catholic Church and some armed groups. Since one of the propaganda techniques has been to lump all opposition together as "terrorist" it is important to look at each of these forces in itself.

To begin with political parties: some observers would attribute the increasing radicalization of the opposition precisely to the government's nullification of party politics as a vehicle for change. El Salvador has been ruled by the military since the 1930s and by the PCN (National Conciliation Party) since 1961. Belief in the electoral process was already eroding, partly due to the PCN's defrauding the UNO (National Opposition Union) coalition in the 1972 elections. Nevertheless, the UNO, composed of Christian Democrat, social democrat and leftist parties, fielded a slate of candidates for the February 1976 elections.

General Humberto Romero, the PCN candidate, who had openly sided with the landholders during the "Agrarian Transformation" controversy, could count on using the state apparatus and on substantial funding. The official election results gave Romero almost a 2 to 1 victory margin. The UNO claimed fraud and as part of its evidence adduced a taped radio message which seemed to be instructing local electoral authorities on how to doctor the vote (e.g. "put in more sugar than coffee"). Massive fraud was facilitated since the PCN already controlled all seats in the Assembly and all mayoralties in the country and could call on members of the paramilitary group ORDEN, who are present even in the tiniest village. A week-long UNO vigil after the election was ended by force and an untold amount of bloodshed. There were numerous stories of bodies being carried away in army trucks and blood being hosed off the streets.

Top UNO leaders went into exile. Those who remained claim that they are unable to organize because their leaders in towns and villages are persecuted. They refused to participate in this year's local election, mistrusting the government's promise of fair elections. The government revived a party to the right of the PCN to give a semblance of opposition. Many say that political parties have been reduced to impotence.

For some years many peasants have channeled their political energies into mass organizations, the BPR (Revolutionary People's Bloc), which includes FECCAS and UTC, and FAPU (United Popular Action Front). The two groups are peasant organizations but some of the leadership has come from outside, particularly from teachers. Their actions are essentially non-violent, such as large demonstrations of peasants marching in San Salvador with economic demands such as a raise in the minimum wage. They have also organized some peaceful land invasions, and offered the land to poor peasants to grow food. In November of last year one group occupied the Labor Ministry and held government officials captive for three days, but there were no assassinations. These peasant groups are non-violent in practice rather than principle. A few of their members carry arms, so that they can return fire, and some of them have taken responsibility for the bombing of property, the cutting of telephone wires, etc. But to call them terrorist in any sense is to stretch the meaning of the term.

Not political rhetoric but deteriorating conditions have given impetus to these groups. The cost of living has risen 263 percent since 1972 while the minimum wage in agriculture has risen only 173 percent (187 percent during cotton picking and 250 percent during coffee harvest). Because many peasants must compete for scarce jobs, rural unemployment and underemployment are high—one study concluded that the average peasant can count on only 141 working days a year. You frequently hear the remark: "It's better to die of a bullet than die of hunger."

Since the basic conflict is in the countryside, industrial labor unions have not been in the forefront. But inflation has fueled union militancy; there were nine strikes last October.

Two left wing guerrilla groups have been active in recent years, the ERP (People's Revolutionary Army) and the FPL (Popular Liberation Forces). They have claimed responsibility for several kidnappings and "executions," most notably the kidnapping of Mauricio Borgonovo, the foreign minister, in May 1977, with a demand that 37 political prisoners be released. He was shot after the government refused to negotiate. These groups have frequently set off bombs and occasionally commandeered radio stations.

The conflict between the government and the Catholic Church has become central to the situation in El Salvador. Some years ago a number of priests were trying newer approaches to evangelization in rural areas. There was an emphasis on identification with the people and their problems, small group discussion, "conscientization" in Paulo Freire's sense, and leadership training. Such an approach tended to take a "political" turn when peasants joined or formed groups such as FECCAS—to them a logical consequence of the "liberating" force of the Gospel. Government and military figures tend to see priests using these approaches as the "agitators" or "brains" for the peasant groups (thereby revealing their own assumption that the peasants by themselves are incapable). In fact priests are usually not in leadership roles: in some cases they draw a fairly sharp line between their "evangelization" and its organizational spinoffs while in others they seek to "accompany" their people even after they have made such a political option.

Since the first weeks of 1977 there has been a fierce

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campaign against such priests. The newspaper diatribes penned by the scribes of the landholders organizations could be anthologized into a book. (The title of one advertisement was: "The Gospel According to Saint Marx"). Early last year a number of priests were deported, others who had left the country were not allowed to return, two were assassinated, and still others left after repeated death threats. In all between 20 and 25 priests (about 10 percent of the Catholic clergy) have been put out of commission. Archbishop Oscar Romero has vigorously defended these priests against charges of Communism or meddling in politics. More remarkable is the fact that the archbishop and the clergy have refused to narrow the conflict to issues of clerical concern but have consistently pointed out that the underlying cause of the conflict is the desperate situation of the peasantry and the violence directed against it.

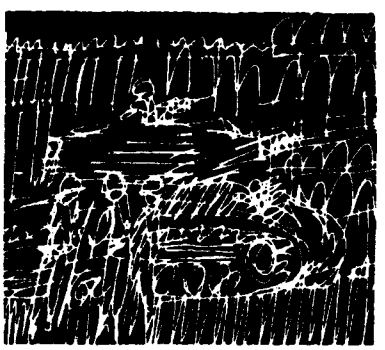
With the power of opposition political parties nullified, the press in the service of the upper class, and peasant organizations persecuted, the church by default has come to function as a center for expression of opposition. The church radio station gives alternative versions of incidents of violence in the countryside. Church human rights groups seek to gather documentation on killings and disappearances perpetrated by security forces or ORDEN.

U.S. reaction to the situation in El Salvador has been curious—and perhaps revealing. A California newspaper owner, Ignacio Lozano, was appointed U.S. ambassador just before the 1976 presidential elections. Apparently because he was not a career diplomat, Lozano felt free to take the Carter human rights rhetoric seriously. He became a nuisance to the Salvadorean government which tried to pretend he spoke only for himself and not the State Department. Lozano returned to private life just before President Romero took office on July 1, but the Carter administration did delay the appointment of a successor, a wrist slap to the government.

Mid-1977 seems to have been a pivotal time for U.S.-Salvadorean relations. The government of lame-duck president Molina had taken a hard line in refusing to negotiate with the FPL when it kidnapped the foreign minister Borgonovo, and a state of siege had been declared. In May the government unleashed a military operation, with tanks, planes and troops, against the region of Aguilares, which was considered a hotbed of peasant activity (and was the parish of Rutilio Grande, a highly respected Jesuit priest who had been murdered). A White Warriors Union was threatening to assassinate all Jesuits. In fact this bizarre threat served to put El Salvador on the map of human rights violators. Tourism was way down and the general business climate was bad.

Some observers believe that President Romero was actually in charge during Molina's final, brutal months in office. When he officially became President, however, he took some steps to improve the government's image; a shoestring opposition newspaper was allowed to resume publication; and some peasant demonstrations were tolerated for a few months. We were told that the government actually compelled ad agencies during this period to send representatives to an *ad hoc* committee precisely to work on the country's image. In September, during the Panama Canal gala in Washington, President Romero invited the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights to visit El Salvador in January of 1978.

These "improvements" effected by Romero were apparently enough for the United States. Frank Devine was named ambassador and, while he has been cautious in public statements, he has created the impression within El Salvador that tensions over human rights violations have diminished. During early 1977 the vote on a $90 million hydroelectric project to be financed by the InterAmerican Development Bank had



been delayed, apparently by the U.S. on human rights considerations. El Salvador had already negotiated European financing for the project, and when the U.S. voted in November for the project many concluded that human rights policy was much more carrot than stick.

Several arguments have been employed in defense of U.S. human rights policy regarding El Salvador: there have been real improvements; our leverage is really limited; it is impossible to know about violence in the countryside since there are always several versions of every incident; Romero should be supported since he faces strong pressure from groups on the right who want even stronger action against leftist provocation. Opposition groups in El Salvador either are convinced that the Carter administration human rights policy has been nothing but propaganda, or they conclude that the Salvadorean government has learned to treat the whole thing as a matter of image with simple ground rules: don't kill priests, don't commit verifiable atrocities.

Are the human rights improvements in El Salvador significant? Violence against peasant leaders continues unabated. A "Law of Public Order and Security," de-

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bated and passed by the Assembly in one day in November, has a number of sweeping provisions which seem designed to achieve the effect of a state of siege with no need to declare it. Strikes and demonstrations are made illegal. Thus a strike in a sugar mill and one in a cement tube factory were immediately ended by troops in February. There have been no demonstrations since the Inter-American Human Rights Commission left in January. When there is a word of a demonstration, troops occupy the plazas preventively (prompting someone to quip: "When we call for a civilian demonstration we get a military demonstration"). Troops were even used to block people from entering a memorial Mass for victims of the February 1977 massacre. Since another provision of the law makes illegal giving out "false or tendentious news or information," people who supplied material for this report could get two years or more in prison, although to my knowledge this provision has not been applied yet.

Rep. Drinan recognized that no priests have been killed since Romero took office but saw a more subtle kind of repression: "We heard countless persons report to us that they are afraid to have the Catholic Bible in the house, that they are afraid to listen to the Mass on the Catholic radio station." There is a "systematic attempt to divide the church by alleging that Christian leaders who want change in the social order are subversives or Communists." He compared a secret eucharist he attended in the cane fields to avoid detection by security forces to the catacomb meetings of early Christians.

Even if we take into account the left-wing guerrilla groups, the victims of left-wing terror are in a ratio of one to the ten who are killed and or disappear from government and right-wing repression. Those who seek to define the problem in El Salvador as "terrorism" can do so only by obscuring two basic points; that most of the opposition is fundamentally non-violent and that the majority of victims of violence are peasants killed or "disappeared" by security forces or ORDEN, in other words, by the government itself.

Certainly these issues are basically matters for Salvadoreans to decide. However, the United States is willy-nilly involved, particularly at a time when it proclaims human rights to be integral to its foreign policy. Unfortunately, until now the Salvadorean government has been getting a message that the problem is one essentially of image. U.S. human rights policy does not seem to respond to an ongoing pattern of elimination of peasant leadership by killing and "disappearances." Until it can be made evident that peasants' lives are as valuable as the lives of priests, lawyers, or journalists, there will be no convincing reply to those who are cynical about the intent of U.S. human rights policy or skeptical about the political will behind it.

THE DETECTIVE AND THE DUN

THE SCREEN

Hercule Poirot and John Collins are birds of a feather, though you'd never know it just to look at them. Poirot is of course Agatha Christie's famous detective of yesteryear. He travels first-class all over the world—the prewar world of high society, that is. This is a world in which people are capable of killing for the abstractions of money or power, but are also blasé about the incredible luxury of their surroundings and their actual physical possessions. It is a very small world where Poirot knows or is known to everyone. He has a comfortably avuncular relationship with them all. When they murder each other, he solves the murders for them and clucks over their indiscretions and their passions. It was thus in *Murder on the Orient Express*, as it is in *Death on the Nile*. The echo between the titles reassures us that the new film is, as Poirot himself would put it, *la même chose* all over again.

John Collins lives in a very different world. He is, according to the title of the film in which he appears, a *Skiptracer*, which is to say, a dun, a man who repossesses the property of deadbeats. Where *Death on the Nile* is a fantasy of the past, *Skiptracer* takes place in the documentary present. The world in which Collins lives is a depressingly familiar one—the world of gimcrack merchandise, of *things* that were not worth owning in the first place, but for which the owners are now being made to sweat blood. While people around Poirot are incredibly casual about possessions of great value, those whom Collins sees are ruining their lives in order to acquire junk that wears out before they can pay for it. Unlike Poirot, Collins knows no one. In the world in which he lives, everyone is a stranger to everyone else. Instead of the wit, wisdom and fine feeling with which Poirot surrounds his work, Collins performs his, of necessity, with ruthlessness and even a certain sadistic pleasure. You would scarcely imagine that the two men are in the same line.

Nonetheless, they are, and their personalities prove remarkably like in the end. In fact, the endings themselves are very like in these two movies, each man pursuing his quarry so relentlessly that the quarry is driven to murder loved ones and commit suicide. In Poirot's case, as usual, this outcome only adds to what he knows about humanity. *"Quelle tragédie,"* he murmurs gently when the murder-suicide pact is carried out right before his eyes. It is as if life were a play he watched from afar. Collins, on the other hand, learns something new not about the rest of the human race, but about himself. Although the particular deadbeat that he drives to murder-suicide makes him the top dollar man in his

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office, he is so broken up about it that he erases all the other names in his casebook from the computer, deep-sixes their files, and walks out on his job, a free man at last.

The two endings are equally ludicrous. *Skiptracer*'s is because self-doubt and redemption are simply inconceivable for someone like Collins, who is a sort of anti-hero version of Jack Webb in *Dragnet*. (David Petersen, who plays Collins, even looks rather like Webb, especially around the mouth.) The ending of *Death on the Nile* is equally impossible, though, because it expects us to admire Poirot (Peter Ustinov) for being who he is. The truth is that with a character like Poirot or Collins, a movie has a no-win proposition. If the hero were allowed truly to be himself, without fake endings or diversions, the audience would walk out in disgust.

Skiptracer and *Death on the Nile* look very different. The former has been shot in very grainy, harshly-lit color. Some of it, I suspect, is actually 16mm blown up to 35mm. The latter has been done in Panavision with diffused light and invariably soft, rich colors that seem to hang in the air. But different as they look, what these two films are really offering us, rather than a drama, is a sort of travelogue. It is not finally the plot, the fiction, that each is trying to put across, but just a tour of a special territory we could not otherwise see.

In *Skiptracer* this territory is, to use the appropriate *Dragnet* terminology, the *modus operandi* of the title character. It is out of curiosity about how a skiptracer works that we go to this film, and at first the film provides just this and nothing more—a hero who is a machine, a working model of how a dun operates. But then the problem is how to dispose of this machine. In order to go someplace, to come to a climax and reach a conclusion, the film needs to try something more ambitious. It needs to make this pavement-pounding Pinocchio into a real boy, a live character with feelings and problems and a story all his own. That's where things go wrong.

In *Death on the Nile* the territory through which we are to get a guided tour is also revealed in the title. The Nile, and not just the river of geography, either, but the river of legend, the one that could exist only in colonial times when the British ruled Egypt and all was right with the world—the river as a setting of picture-book beauty and mystery. The movie never lets its camera stray far from this background as Ms. Christie's characters make their way up the river on a luxury side-wheeler. *Death* even contrives to send them ashore for excursions, adventures and murder attempts in the Temple of Karnak or wherever. And there is even one character, Jacqueline de Bellefort (Mia Farrow), who is an attempt to bridge the gap between the murder-mystery plot and the travelogue ambiance which distracts us from the dramatic poverty of all these rich people. A jilted lover who has come to the Nile to torment her ex- and his new wife on their honeymoon, Jacqueline does so by constantly popping out from behind pyramids and statues to rattle off tour-guide lectures in a taunting tone of voice. This drives the honeymooners mad, and it drives me mad, too. I wish she would speak more slowly so I could catch what she was saying. Honestly, one finds these surly, ill-mannered guides everywhere one goes these days.

COLIN L. WESTERBECK, JR.

BOOKS

PAUL AND JUDAISM: THE ISSUE OF COVENANT

ROBERT L. WILKEN

Paul and Palestinian Judaism

E. P. SANDERS

Fortress Press, $25 [627 pp.]

Most of the books of the New Testament were written by Jews. Early Christianity, like the community at Qumran on the Dead Sea, was a sectarian movement within first century Judaism and its language and message can best be understood within the context of Judaism as it was practiced at that time. Traditionally Christians have interpreted the New Testament in the light of the Old Testament (Taanach), the latest book of which was written approximately two hundred years before the beginning of Christianity. In recent years, however, it has become commonplace among scholars to begin study of the New Testament with Jewish religion and Jewish life as it is exhibited not in ancient Israel but in the history of the Jews during the period of the Second Commonwealth and immediately after the destruction of the second temple in 70 C.E. Nevertheless, argues E. P. Sanders, New Testament scholar at McMaster University in Hamilton, Ontario, the edifice of New Testament scholarship constructed over the last hundred years is based on a systematic misunderstanding of Judaism.

In the work of twentieth century New Testament scholars, Judaism is presented as an inadequate and in-

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ferior religion. The Jew could not hope to have a genuine relation with God because his religion was legalistic, based on human merit and the observance of arcane laws. Judaism taught a way of life marked by obligation, work, righteousness, fear, and its God was distant, aloof, inaccessible. As one presumed "authority" in the field put it: "It is obvious that such a system does not admit of forgiveness in any spiritual sense of the term." How such a view of Judaism could establish itself so firmly in New Testament scholarship may seem a mystery to the outsider, but the reasons are plain enough: 1) Most New Testament scholars, until recently, have been Protestants and they have projected the Reformation understanding of grace onto the documents of the first century, siding with Paul (Luther) against the Jews (Rome). 2) Uncritical use of the same books to interpret Judaism without examining the sources on which they were supposedly based. Scholarly clichés are passed from one generation of scholars to another, and then enshrined in reference works such as the "indispensable" Kittel, a theological dictionary of the vocabulary of the New Testament. 3) Simple ignorance of the Jewish sources from the period written in Hebrew. New Testament scholars read classical Hebrew but not the Hebrew of the Mishnah and Midrashim, contemporary Jewish documents. As Sanders ruefully observes, many scholars cannot even look up the passages they cite freely (from secondary works) in their books.

This book is not a study of New Testament scholarship, however, but of Paul, the Jew who converted to Christianity, and whose writings form a large part of the New Testament (though not as large as one would think since Sanders follows current scholarly orthodoxy, using only Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Philippians, 1 Thessalonians, and Philemon, excluding the other epistles as inauthentic as well as the information in Acts). What is true of New Testament scholarship in general is even more true of Paul. Scholars have not only sided with Paul's polemic against Jewish "legalism" (a point amply documented by Sanders), but they have used Paul's polemic against Judaism to "define the Judaism which is then contrasted with Paul's thought." Those who have attempted to construct an alternate view of Judaism based on an independent reading of Jewish sources, notably G. F. Moore, were ignored and sometimes ridiculed. Instead Christian scholars turned to Jewish sources written in Greek, many of which had been passed on in translations within the Christian church. This resulted in the anomalous situation that the scholarly portrait of Judaism was based on the very sources Jews did not recognize. This is not to say there was no rationale to the approach. Judaism, like Christianity, is the product of a long historical development, in the one case leading to "rabbinic Judaism" and the other to "orthodox Christianity."

Later tradition often reworked earlier sources to conform to later developments and much that was Jewish at the time of Paul was forgotten or deliberately discarded by later generations. Philo the Alexandrian Jew, for example, a prime source for first century Judaism, is not even mentioned in the Talmud. There is reason, then, to consult sources which were not preserved in the rabbinic writings, but not reason enough to exclude the rabbinic writings altogether. It would be somewhat similar to constructing a picture of early Christianity by systematically ignoring the New Testament. Sanders's argument, however, is not that one should use only the rabbinic sources in Hebrew, but that scholars should use all the sources. His study is based then on the Mishnah and early Midrashim (Jewish biblical commentaries), the so called intertestamental literature transmitted chiefly within the Christian church, and the Dead Sea Scrolls, and his claim is that they exhibit a common pattern of religion.

Sanders's broadside against the current state of New Testament scholarship, a task he undertakes reluctantly, has of course a larger purpose: a fresh interpretation of the religion of Palestinian Judaism and of Paul. In his view, the primary religious category for Judaism is covenant, i.e. the belief that God has elected the Jewish people to be his own and that the covenant is a sign of his enduring relation to them. For the Jew the covenant is always assumed, taken for granted if you will, and Jewish literature is only casually interested in how one becomes a member of the covenant. The question does arise in the case of proselytes, but for most Jews a person is born into the covenant and remains in it as long as he does not willfully separate from it. For a Jew, assuming membership in a covenant people, the religious question takes the form: how do I obey the God who chose me, redeemed me, and made a covenant with me? The rabbis, then, are concerned about obedience, duty, ritual actions, law.

The questions "what must I do to be saved," or "how is man reconciled to God" do not arise because it is assumed that, as a member of the covenant, one is reconciled to God. The obligations of which the Bible and later Jewish literature speak, the "works" which so offend Christian scholars, do not reconcile one to God, nor earn one a place in the covenant. Only God can initiate the covenant, as the following Midrash on Exodus 20 illustrates: " 'I Am the Lord Thy God (Ex. 20.2).' Why were the Ten Commandments not said at the beginning of the Torah? To what may this be compared? To the following: A king who entered a province said to the people: May I be your king? But the people said to him: Have you done anything good for us that you should rule over us? What did he do then? He built the city wall for them, he brought in the water supply for them, and he fought their battles. Then when he said to them: May I be your king? They said to him: Yes, yes. Likewise, God. He brought the Israelites out of Egypt, divided the sea for them, sent down the manna for them,

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brought up the well for them, brought the quails for them. He fought for them the battle with Amalek. Then He said to them: I am to be your king. And they said to Him: Yes, yes." A few paragraphs later the same Midrash continues: "I am He whose reign you have taken upon yourselves in Egypt. And when they said to Him. 'Yes, yes,' He continued: "Now, just as you accepted My reign, you must also accept My decrees: 'Thou shalt not have other gods before me.' "

The pattern of religion exhibited in this Midrash and throughout the rabbinic writings Sanders calls "covenantal nomism," by which he means that those who have been made members of the covenant through the prior gracious action of God are expected to assume the obligations and responsibilities which come with this election, namely observance of the law. His argument, however, is not simply that this pattern can be found in rabbinic literature but that it is characteristic of all Palestinian Jewish literature (except IV Ezra) from this period. Most of the book is given over to a careful and deliberate analysis of the chief bodies of literature from the period: rabbinic, apocryphal and pseudo-epigraphical writing from the so-called "intertestamental" period, i.e., the period of the Second Commonwealth, and Qumran. He concludes that "covenantal nomism was pervasive in Palestine before 70. It was thus the basic type of religion known by Jesus and pre-supposed by Paul." (p. 426)

It is indeed an impressive argument and one which will generate much controversy. At the level of religious ideas, however, and in response to the caricature of Judaism regnant in most New Testament scholarship, Sanders has made his case. Judaism exhibits a different religion pattern from Christianity, but, like Christianity, Judaism begins with the idea of divine initiative, with grace; and God's initiative can be seen in election. In Judaism the elect community takes a different form than it does in Christianity because God elected the Jews as a people. For Christians, at least in most of their history, the idea of "people" is a derived notion, not the basis of election.

By the time Sanders turns to Paul (on p. 431) it is apparent how much he has altered the scenery of first century Judaism, thereby forcing a reconsideration of Paul's polemic against Judaism. It is commonly assumed that Paul turned to Christ because of the onerous demands of the law, demands which he (and others) could not keep and which only exposed his sinfulness. The law, it is said, gave him an awareness of his sin and his need of salvation. But if this view is correct, Paul's polemic is inexplicable, for he does not seem to have understood the very religion in which he was raised. How could Paul have studied a Midrash such as that cited above and come to such a conclusion? Why would a Jew wish to be free of the law of a gracious God? Why should faith be the antinomy of law? This point has not been lost on Jewish scholars. Long ago Solomon Schechter wrote. "Either the theology of the Rabbis must be wrong, its conception of God debasing, its leading motives materialistic and coarse, and its teachers lacking in enthusiasm and spirituality, or the Apostle to the Gentiles is quite unintelligible."

Sanders's answer to Schechter's question is elegant in its simplicity: the solution comes before the problem, the discovery of Christ before dissatisfaction with the Law. Paul, by his own admission, had no trouble observing the Law (Philippians 3) and his arguments against the law do not rest on his (or anyone's) inability to keep it. They rest on one thing: Paul's experience of Christ. Paul did not turn to Christ because he could not keep the Law; rather, he had a revelatory experience of Christ which so transformed his life that nothing he had known before that time could compare to what he had come to know.

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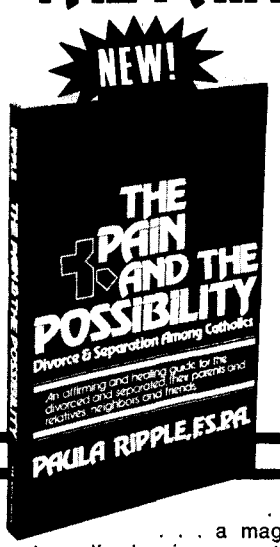
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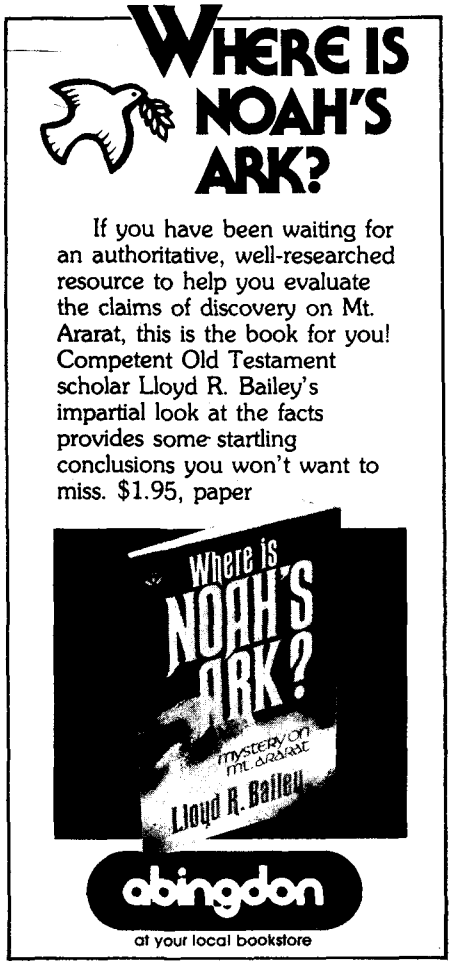
The solution preceded the problem, *the gospel preceded the Law*. What prompted his criticism of the Law was not his experience of the Law but his experience of Christ.

Paul seldom, if ever, appeals to the theological idea that the Messiah has come as a reason for considering the Law invalid. What is wrong with the Law is not that its time has come to an end with the advent of the Messianic age, but that the splendor of Christ surpasses all other splendor (2 Corinthians). "Whatever gain I had," says Paul in Philippians, "I counted as loss . . . because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord." The central religious category for Paul, then, is not justification by grace through faith, but being "in Christ," and it was this "experience" which led to the creation of a pattern of religion distinct from the religion of Palestinian Judaism. Paul is the first truly "experiential" theologian in the history of Christianity, a reason no doubt why many later theologians have preferred interpreting him in theological categories which minimize the experiential basis of his religious claims.

There is much to ponder in this book. It is the most challenging work in New Testament studies to appear in a generation. By stressing the covenant in Judaism, Sanders forces Christian scholars to reconsider the relation of rabbinic Judaism to classical Judaism, and by stressing the experiential side of Paul he raises many questions which harken back to the nineteenth century. Wilhelm Wrede, it will be recalled, called Paul the "second founder of Christianity." The great value of the work lies in the care Sanders takes in expounding the Jewish sources, many of which are translated into English for the first time and cited at length. What the book offers is an interpretation of the texts from the perspective of religious ideas. What is missing is a discussion of the shape and form of the various communities which produced the literature.

Religious ideas take on different significance as they are filtered through distinctive communities. The community at Qumran was a "sectarian" community, i.e., one was not born into it but chose to become a member. It exhibited, in Troeltsch's term, "sect-type" characteristics: admission was voluntary and selective, standards of behavior were rigorous, and it set itself against the ruling authorities and institutions, e.g., the temple. The rabbinic writings, on the other hand, speak to Jews living in cities and villages, observant and non-observant, pious as well as languid Jews. The community was defined by birth, by upbringing, in some cases by geography. Covenantal nomism would, it seems, have a different meaning to the Jew living at Qumran than it had to the farmer in Galilee who went to the synagogue on Sabbath and said his prayers during the week. The sectarian character of Qumran, based on location (out of the city in the desert) as well as ideology, and the sectarianism of Paul, based on an exclusive religious experience, gave each group similarities which they did not share with the Judaism of the cities and countryside. Whether the similarities are significant enough to alter Sanders's arguments about the Jewish "pattern of religion" I doubt, but there do seem to be gradations between the Judaism of the rabbis, the various sectarian groups within first century Judaism, and the Jews who became Christians. No doubt it was precisely because Qumran did not rest on the religious experience of "conversion" that its modification of Judaism was less radical than Paul's, whose followers eventually broke with the parent religion. However one deals with these questions, they are provoked by this fresh and original work.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Mencken. A Study of His Thought

CHARLES A. FECHER

Knopf, $15 [391 pp.]

DANIEL AARON

This new study of Mencken is being hailed by some of his old friends and critics as the most trustworthy interpretation of the Master yet to appear—"so far and away the best work of any kind I have read on Henry," writes Alfred A. Knopf in his warm and amusing foreword, "as to leave the competition nowhere." Readers knowledgeable in Menckeniana, especially those familiar with Guy Forgue's superb book, are likely to find such praise excessive, yet it is not hard to see why Menckenites should welcome Fecher's intellectual portrait of HLM. It is a conscientious, well-informed, and honest rendering by a self-described "Mencken buff" whose devotion to his subject all but overwhelms his effort to be dispassionate.

Mencken's biographers, Fecher thinks, have succeeded collectively if not singly in presenting his "tremendous personality" but have done less well in "synthesizing and weighing the

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body of his ideas." Even his professed admirers tend to fault his criticism, to regard him primarily as a brilliant bad boy and entertainer, and to miss or misinterpret a corrective to this simplistic view. He sketches Mencken's Baltimore background, family influences, the formative experiences of the aggressive and self-confident cub journalist. He pays particular attention to the writers and thinkers who shaped his opinions—opinions arrived at early in his career and adhered to with remarkable consistency for the rest of his life.

The problem of organizing the enormous mass of Mencken's published and unpublished writings, literally hundreds of thousands of words, would daunt the most intrepid investigator. And given his omnivorous reading, his delight in both the esoteric and the common, any attempt to reduce his prodigal output into some coherent design seems hardly worth the effort. Fecher has elected to subsume the Menckenian welter into broad elastic categories: the philosopher, the political theorist, the critic, the philologian, and the stylist. Since Mencken's "thought" pretty well boils down to a relatively few and not especially complex basic ideas, the categories tend to overlap. The Nietzschean influence can be seen in his political theory, in his vendetta against what he calls "Puritanism" and the Genteel Tradition, and in his prose style. Nor can the anti-democrat be detached from the theologian, literary critic, or humorist. The professor-baiter defends the code of the natural aristocrat, execrates farmers, Methodists, politicians, and prohibitionists. The celebrator of Conrad, Dreiser, Beethoven, and Pilsner beer relishes the squalid brochures of mountebanks and the vulgarities of hoi polloi. What links the myriad facets of Mencken's "thought" are less his axiomatic beliefs (materialism, natural inequality, the second-rateness of American culture, the perniciousness of "Puritanism" etc.) than his prevailing tone, language, style. He believed, as he put it, "that a good phrase is better than a Great Truth."

At bottom, as Fecher rightly says, Mencken was an artist, but he also sees him as a figure of Goethean dimensions. And in the process of transforming his hero into a universal man, he magnifies his achievements and is tempted into making questionable assertions about the extent and depth of his "impact." Mencken, according to Fecher, "raised criticism to the level of a fine art." He "quite literally changed the course of American literature" and possessed the largest vocabulary "one may safely venture, of any writer in the English language." Fecher flatly declares: "There was not a single notable writer of the twenties and thirties who was unwilling to acknowledge his indebtedness, either directly or indirectly, to H.L. Mencken." This is not to say that Fecher is uncritical. He concedes that Mencken can be harsh and strident, that he may have gone too far in his diatribes against democracy, that his dismissal of Nazism was "the least creditable aspect of his long career," that he could be "cruelly unfair," that he neither liked nor under-

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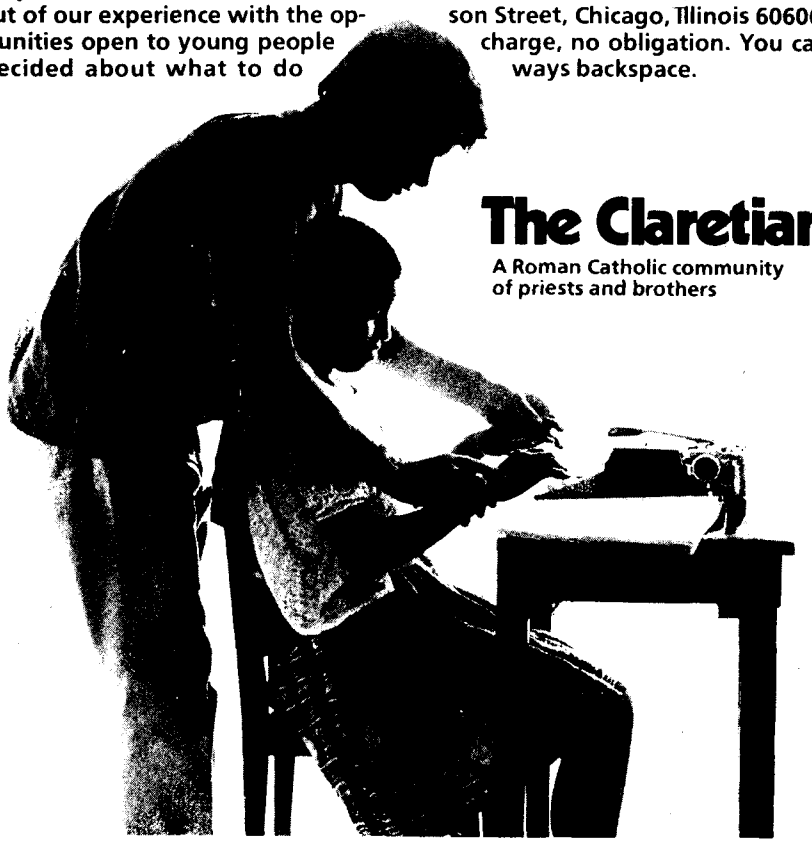

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stood the work of writers "who emerged out of the first world war," that he was not a "reliable" critic of poetry or the theater, that he could be snobbish, cold, and callous "toward the average human being." But at the same time he often extenuates Mencken's lapses and searches for the degree of truth in his exaggerations. Granted that Mencken was not always right or reasonable, still, Fecher argues, "the things he attacked deserved to be attacked," and whatever his faults, his immense influence on his times "puts him among the giants in our cultural history."

Fecher has made a good case for Mencken as a powerful cultural force, a writer of extraordinary inventiveness, a humorist comparable to Mark Twain. He has also revealed him (sometimes inadvertently) in such a way as to qualify strongly his own claims for Mencken's universality. He knows Mencken's work thoroughly and writes about it with authority. He is less trustworthy in his comments on American history and culture and seems quite content to accept uncritically many of Mencken's judgments about America's literary past and the situation of the arts in the United States when Mencken began to challenge the cultural custodians. James and Howells and Paul Elmer More were better literary critics than either Mencken or his disciple allows.

And who is Fecher to say that Mencken's three pieces on James Huneker are more interesting now than all of Huneker's writing, or (more preposterously) that "The whole collected works of Thorstein Veblen are probably of less importance—and certainly less readable—than the great essay 'Professor Veblen and the Cow.'" There were areas of American literature and thought that Fecher was less often in such enthusiastic agreement with the Baltimore Sage.

These objections notwithstanding, Fecher's book is an excellent introduction to the ebullient iconoclast who peers out at the reader from a series of evocative photographs and is heard in hundreds of expressive passages. Fecher may have palliated some of Mencken's grosser prejudices, but he has done justice to his rectitude and professionalism—and above all to his astonishing intellectual voracity and verbal energy.

Adlai Stevenson and the World

JOHN BARTLOW MARTIN

Doubleday, $15 [946 pp.]

Grassroots

GEORGE McGOVERN

Random House, $12.50 [307 pp.]

ROBERT K. LANDERS

Inauguration Day, 1961. Adlai Stevenson and the others who were to be in the Cabinet sat on the platform and watched as the torch was passed to the new generation willing to pay any price and bear any burden. "After the ceremony," John Bartlow Martin writes, Stevenson "alone, of all the Cabinet, had no limousine to pick him up. He blamed the 'Irish Mafia' of Kennedy's staff. Afoot he started out to make his way in the biting wind up Pennsylvania Avenue to the reviewing stand at the White House. It pleased him to note that the crowds on the sidewalk gave only perfunctory applause to Kennedy and the dignitaries who drove by in the parade but when they recognized Stevenson on foot among them they cheered."

John Kennedy had drawn, directly or indirectly, some part of his public self from Stevenson's, but the relationship between the young President and his Ambassador to the United Nations was, as Martin puts it, "uncomfortable and sometimes almost painful." Stevenson, to his (as it now seems) credit, did not really feel at home on the "pragmatic," "tough," "decisive" New Frontier. "Stevenson seems to have thought Kennedy cold-blooded, even heartless," Martin writes. "He thought Kennedy's de-

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cisive approach to problems led him to such disasters as the Bay of Pigs and said that one of these decisive and impulsive young men could bumble us into nuclear war. He thought Kennedy too sure of himself." And, in fact, Kennedy and his cohorts did bumble us, not, to be sure, into nuclear war (although in the Cuban missile crisis, they came close), but into Vietnam, a bumble about which Stevenson himself, alas, as Martin judges, "probably was ambivalent."

Martin, in this second volume (no less excellent and only slightly less engrossing than the first one) of his definitive biography of Stevenson, takes his subject from defeat in 1952 to death in 1965. When, on that cold day in January, 1961, the torch was passed, but not to him, Stevenson's career altered course; as Martin moves him across the ensuing years, the author honorably tries to remain impartial as between the ambassador and his successive presidential masters. For the most part, Martin succeeds; yet at times, his admiration for those masters seems to distort, if only a little, his view of their servant. He neglects, as an instance, to note that Robert Kennedy, from whose account of the Cuban missile crisis Martin is not otherwise reluctant to quote, wrote of an offer made by Premier Khrushchev during that crisis, that it "was not unreasonable and did not amount to a loss to the United States or to our NATO allies." Had Martin paused to question President Kennedy's refusal to accept this clear and "not unreasonable" offer to remove the Soviet missiles in Cuba in exchange for removal of the U.S. missiles in Turkey, he would have strengthened the impression that Stevenson, in earlier suggesting, to much criticism and little avail, a similar swap, had been not just courageous, but wise.

"After the Cuban missile crisis," Martin quotes George Ball as saying, "Adlai was only going through the motions. His role had become ritualistic. From then on he knew he was not going to have an impact on foreign policy—which was what was most important to him. Washington was a force of its own and he was not part of it. . . . He was going through the motions, making speeches, yet with a feeling in his heart that it didn't make any difference to the world if he fell over and had a heart attack. I found it unattractive and terribly sad. . . . Adlai was a terribly unhappy man. History had passed him by. His life had passed him by. He had no place to go. He talked about leaving the UN but he had no place to go." In fact, however, there was a place for Stevenson: the leadership of the then growing opposition to the U.S. involvement in Vietnam. It was a place he was urged by a few to take; but he didn't do so. It is this failure (which perhaps he would have rectified, had he lived), and not so much his estrangement from power in Washington or the various shabby humiliations to which he was subjected, which makes this great man seem to have been, near the end, so sadly lost.

George McGovern remembers that, his wife and children asleep, he was painting the living room of their apartment near Dakota Wesleyan University (where has was teaching history), when he heard Stevenson deliver his post-midnight acceptance speech at the 1952 Democratic convention in Chicago. "That was it," he recalls: He put down his paint brush and entered Democratic politics. (McGovern's account of his pre-1972 years, in his autobiography, *Grassroots,* is interesting, although it would be more so had Robert Sam Anson not provided a fuller and better written account of them in his 1972 biography, *McGovern.*)

The man from South Dakota, however, was a rather different sort from Stevenson. No one would ever caricature McGovern as a wishy-washy Hamlet. "Temperamentally," McGovern notes, "I am not a very good temporizer." *He* was not ambivalent about Vietnam: he assailed our "policy of moral debacle and political defeat" there as early as September, 1963. *Right from the start,* as his

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1972 slogan boasted. And so he was.

Yet McGovern seems always to have underestimated the complexity of the moral and political realms. If there are indeed occasions that call for, and often do not get, in his phrase, "forthright leadership," there are nevertheless also other occasions, perhaps more frequent, that call for leadership less forthright. If McGovern only had temporized at the appropriate times during the Eagleton and the lesser afflictions which destroyed his 1972 effort, he might have . . . done better than he did. To judge from his fascinating account of that 1972 campaign, McGovern seems to grasp retrospectively how each mishandled situation should have been handled; yet he seems unable to draw the general lesson; he remains as convinced as ever of the need for leadership always forthright.

Still, if McGovern would not have made the most adroit President imaginable, he was undeniably a good and high-minded man; he was right about Vietnam and much else; and he was not Richard Nixon. If McGovern, as he writes, has to live with the knowledge that he lost the election to "the most discredited man ever to occupy the White House," so too does the nation.

IN BRIEF

THE DARK LADY, *by Louis Auchincloss, Houghton Mifflin,* $8.95. [246 pp.]

The dark lady of the title is one Elesina Dart, who comes off two bad marriages, heavy drinking, and a marginal acting career (she once played that other dark lady in a comedy based on Shakespeare's sonnets) to seduce and marry the influential Irving Stein, judge and connoisseur of art, to seduce his son David after a prostate operation and heart attack have left Irving *hors de combat*, and to win political office after David is killed in the second World War. Elesina always lands on her feet, credit for which capacity goes to Ivy Trask, an older woman who manages Elesina's career. "What Elesina wants," someone remarks, "Ivy delivers." It is clear enough why Ivy should want to help Elesina; much less clear are why Elesina should accept the help and what we are to make of her in her role of protégée. Other matters, too, aren't really worked out so well as one might wish, among them David Stein's eagerness to assert the Jewish identity his father always soft-pedaled, an emblematic quest that his early death frustrates.

The best thing here—the surest reminder of earlier Auchincloss triumphs like *Portrait in Brownstone* and *A World of Profit*—is the character of Irving Stein, particularly as it is revealed in his tendency to make connections, often comically incongruous ones, between his worlds of business and art: "It had always been his habit of mind to fit each new event into an aesthetic pattern. He liked to match the successful underwriting of an issue of municipal sewer bonds to the discovery, after months of seeking, of the twin of a Cellini dolphin, completing a gold centerpiece." I finished *The Dark Lady* wishing it had been mainly the story of Irving, not Elesina.

MARK TAYLOR

BILLY PHELAN'S GREATEST GAME, *by William Kennedy, Viking, $9.95* [282 pp.]

With one notable exception, this is a novel about repugnant characters, told by an artful novelist who is concerned mainly with evoking a feeling of time and place, rather than with conveying a message. The time is 1938. The place is Albany, New York.

The notable exception is Martin Daugherty, a middle-aged journalist and dabbler in fiction, who "preferred personal insight to social justice, though he wrote of both frequently in his column, which was a confusion of radicalism, spiritual exploration and foolery." Daugherty is a political columnist for an Albany daily newspaper.

Billy Phelan of the title is a card player, dice shooter, and pool hustler, "a champion drinker who could go for three days on the sauce and not yield to sleep, a double-twenty specialist at the dart board, a chancy, small-time bookie, and so on."

Morris Berman, another major character, is a degenerate who "used to drink around town with Legs Diamond and had hoodlums for pals." (William Kennedy's last novel, by the way, entitled *Legs*, was based on the gangster, Legs Diamond.)

Then there are three McCall brothers—Patsy, Matt and Bindy—who have ruled the city and county of Albany for seventeen years, and who are as corrupt as lackluster. Early in the novel, Bindy's son, Charlie Boy, is kidnapped. Through Daugherty's intervention, Billy Phelan becomes an un-

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willing liaison between the kidnappers and the McCalls. The plot is resolved intriguingly.

In general, among the dreary lot of petty thugs and Irish politicians in this novel, Martin Daugherty stands out as a believable, humane, conscientious dreamer, worthy of inhabiting the compassionate imagination of his Irish-born wife, "who had been taught in the rocky wastes of Connemara that druids roamed the land, even to this day." This reader, for one, wishes the novel had been more Daugherty's than it was.

PHILLIP CORWIN

CORRESPONDENCE

(Continued from page 643)

mentality by virtue of its being so obviously absent in him. I feel we can contrast his work profitably to that of other better known "Catholic" poets—for example, to the "Catholic Period" poems of Robert Lowell, who was much given at the time to (western?) attention-seeking and obvious moral posturing. In Moffitt, however, a true moral center and creative religious expression, dwells. One feels, coming upon Baker's broadside, that he could scarcely have chosen a more unsuitable fellow-countryman to have directed it at.

FRANK LONERGAN

Abigail McCarthy (con't)

moralists in their way. They dealt imaginatively with subjects we were still generally unwilling to face like (as Isaac Asimov frequently reminds us) population explosion, rocket ships, lunar exploration, atomic bombs, radiation sickness and polluted atmosphere. Bradbury once said, "Science fiction is a wonderful hammer; I intend to use it when and if necessary, to bark a few shins or knock a few heads, in order to make people leave people alone." There was purpose in that even though leaving people alone is far from the whole answer. Today's best writers of speculative fiction, however, seem to have no moral view; they are poets and artists, akin to the drug culture, dealers in nightmares and despair.

Depressing is hardly the word for the effect of this fiction. The most depressing effect of all is the thought that its writers might be right about human nature and the destiny of mankind—a thought in profound conflict with the spirit of Christianity and the principles of democracy, it goes without saying. There is some faint hope given in Aldous Huxley's afterthought a decade or more after he wrote *Brave New World.* If he had it to write over again, he said, he thought he would offer a third alternative to his character, the Savage. He would offer the possibility of a sane choice . . . a community in which "economics would be decentralist and Henry-Georgian, politics Kropotkinesque cooperative, science and technology would be used as though, like the Sabbath, they had been made for man, not . . . as though man were to be adapted and enslaved to them. Religion would be the conscious and intelligent pursuit of man's Final End, the unitive knowledge of the immanent . . ." and so on.

There is a great similarity between this choice and the varied experiments launched by young idealists in the '60s—almost all of them doomed by their members' fragmented philosophy and inability to escape the framework of the larger world. Are we doing anything to make such a choice possible? To ground it in faith, hope and love?

REVIEWERS

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